THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION

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THE CHURCH'S

ONE FOUNDATION

AND OTHER SERMONS.

BY

REV. B. F. BARRETT.

EDITED FROM HIS MANUSCRIPTS
BY HIS DAUGHTER,
GERTRUDE A. BARRETT.

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TO ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

OF EVERY

FAITH AND EVERY CREED

AND TO THOSE ALSO WHO AS YET HAVE FOUND

NO FAITH AND NO CREED

TO SATISFY THEM

THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

I. THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION, ... 1–12

"And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—MATT. XVI, 18.

II. FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHECY, "BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW," 13–26

"And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."—REV. XXI, 5.

III. DESCENT OF THE NEW JERUSALEM, ... 27–39

"And I, John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."—REV. XXI, 2.

IV. THE BREAD OF LIFE, ... 40–48

"Then said Jesus unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."—JOHN VI, 32–35.

V. THE ARM OF THE LORD, ... 49–59

"His strength is in the clouds."—PSALMS LXVIII, 34.

VI. CHRIST'S TEMPTATION AND ITS LESSON, ... 60–71

"Again the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."—MATT. IV, 8, 9, 10.

PAGE

VII. REALITY OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD, ... 72–85

"*Then the devil leaveth Him, and behold angels came and ministered unto Him.*"—MATT. IV, 11.

VIII. THE CORE OF CHRISTIANITY, ... 86–96

"*If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*" —MATT. XIX, 17.

IX. KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS, ... 97–109

"*He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*"—JOHN XIV, 21.

X. THE BITTER WATERS OF MARAH, ... 110–120

"*And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah; for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree* (lit., a piece of wood); *which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.*"—EX. XV, 23, 24, 25.

XI. THE PURE IN HEART, ... 121–134

"*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*"—MATT. V, 8.

XII. THE HEAVENLY MARRIAGE, ... 135–148

"*For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.*"—MATT. XXII, 30.

XIII. OUR HOMES, ... 149–160

"*Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.*"—JOHN XII, 3.

XIV. CAIN AND ABEL, ... 161–168

"*Am I my brother's keeper?*"—GEN. IV, 9.

XV. RELIGION IN BUSINESS, ... 169–179

"*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" —MATT. VI, 33.

PAGE

XVI. THE TONGUE, ... 180–194

"*I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.*"—PS. XXXIX, 1.

XVII. REMAINS—THEIR MEANING AND USE, ... 195–209

"*Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth.*"—JOHN III, 7, 8.

XVIII. INEFFICACY OF A DEATH-BED REPENTANCE, . . 210–220

"*Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*"—REV. XXII, 14.

XIX. SPIRITUAL COMPENSATION, ... 221–231

"*For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.*"—LUKE VI, 38.

XX. GREATNESS IN THE GOSPEL SENSE, ... 232–245

"*Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.*"—MATT. XX, 26–28.

XXI. PRAYER, ... 246–260

"*After this manner, therefore, pray ye.*"—MATT. VI, 9.

XXII. AS IN HEAVEN, SO ON EARTH, ... 261–269

"*Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*"—MATT. VI, 10.

XXIII. THE TEN VIRGINS, ... 270–280

"*Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom,*" *etc.*—MATT. XXV, 1–14.

XXIV. PREACHING THE GOSPEL, ... 281–293

"*And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*"—MARK XVI, 15, 16.

PAGE

XXV. CHEERFULNESS A RELIGIOUS DUTY, ... 294–305

"*Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.*"—PSALMS XVI, 11.

XXVI. HOW COULD CHRIST, IF DIVINE, PRAY? . . . 306–316

"*He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.*"—LUKE IX, 28.

XXVII. THE UNJUST STEWARD, ... 317–328

"*And He said unto His disciples, There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods,*" *etc.* —LUKE XVI, 1–8.

XXVIII. THE AT-ONE-MENT, ... 329–341

"*Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.*"—JOHN XIII, 31.

XXIX. THE HOLY SUPPER, ... 342–353

"*This do in remembrance of me.*"—LUKE XXII, 19.

XXX. CHRISTMAS SERMON, ... 354–362

"*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field,*" *etc.*—LUKE II, 8–17.

THE CHURCH'S
ONE FOUNDATION
AND OTHER SERMONS.

ABBREVIATIONS

OF THE TITLES OF THE WORKS OF SWEDENBORG QUOTED IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES.

A. C.	Arcana Cœlestia.
D. P.	Divine Providence.
D. S. S.	Doctrine of the Sacred Scriptures.
Ap. Ex.	Apocalypse Explained.
H. H.	Heaven and Hell.
C. L.	Conjugial Love.
Brf. Ex.	Brief Expositions of the Doctrines of the New Church.
T. C. R.	True Christian Religion.
A. E.	Apocalypse Explained.
D. L.	Doctrine of the Lord.

I.

THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION.

And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.—MATT. XVI, 18.

No one who comprehends the spirit and principles of the Christian religion, and who has any just view of the governing propensities of the unregenerate human heart, can fail to perceive that the purity of the one and the impurity of the other stand in striking contrast. Christianity, whose principles are all contained in the Word of the Lord, has been struggling these eighteen hundred years and more to create man anew in its own beautiful likeness; while the unregenerate heart, in its blind, perverse, corrupt state, has been not less busy in transforming Christianity into its own repulsive image. Christianity, or the Lord through its instrumentality, has been benignly working for the purification and exaltation of man, while man has been equally active in corrupting and degrading Christianity. And the contest is still going on—a contest between heaven and hell, light and darkness, God's pure and ineffable love, and the disorderly and selfish cravings of the unregenerate heart.

While, therefore, the Word of the Lord has done much, and is destined to do immeasurably more, to exalt and purify and ennoble man, man, through his blindness and perverseness, has done much to corrupt and falsify and adulterate the Word. The pure water of life has been defiled by the impurity of the very hearts for whose cleansing it was given. The wisdom which has come down from Heaven to make men pure and humble and heavenly-minded, like the angels, has been seized upon by corrupt human nature, and converted into a means of gratifying and increasing its selfishness and pride.

Our text, like many other passages of Holy Writ, is *one* which, through the false interpretation put upon it by corrupt human nature, has been made to feed and foster the very propensity which it was given to subdue.

The selfish love of the natural man is inclined to arrogate to itself supreme dominion over others—dominion over their souls as well as their bodies. It craves all power in heaven and on earth. And the reason is, because self-love, viewed as to its interior and real quality, is the love of being as God—the love of absolute supremacy—the love of owning no superior and of being subject to no control. And of all the evil lusts of the natural man, the lust of dominion is the most dangerous, the most infernal. It comes from the lowest and worst of all the hells, and tends to drag all who receive and cherish it down to the same dark abyss.

And so this selfish and insane lust of dominion, ever ready to justify itself, has seized upon the divine declaration in our text, and perverted its meaning in a manner to suit its own ambitious designs. And we know what deplorable consequences have resulted from the perversion of this single text. Babylon, with all its loathsome tyranny and oppression, with all its deeds of treachery and horror, with all its fetters and dungeons for the soul, with all its miserable mummery *mis*called worship, with all its priestly pomp and arrogance, with all its denials and prohibitions of that most sacred of human rights—the right of private judgment in matters of religious faith—Babylon, with all its imposing shows, and cunning artifices, and blood-stained walls, and countless infamies—Babylon, "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth"—"the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird"—this Babylon has built itself up mainly on the falsehood engrafted upon the divine words of our text. And it should be borne in mind that all these terrible consequences have resulted from a too literal interpretation of these words. Whenever men confirm the mere appearances of truth in the letter of God's Word, and overlook or reject its spiritual sense, they commit as great, though it may not always be as *grievous*, an error as that into which the Romish church has fallen in regard to the passage before us. And do not Protestant churches, by erecting a standard which the Lord never set up, by establishing tests of discipleship which He never authorized, by decreeing faith alone to be the ground of man's acceptance with God—do they not in reality, though not in form, endorse the Romish error in regard to binding and loosing? Do they not virtually claim to hold in their hands the keys of the kingdom, or the power of opening and shutting heaven to whomsoever they will? And do not the men of the New Church commit a similar mistake the moment they depart from the clear and indisputable teachings of the Word as interpreted by the illumined Swedenborg, and attempt to exalt into prominence, and to dignify with the title of *important*, if not essential, some fancy or inference of their own, or of others no wiser than themselves?

But the Lord's Church rests not upon any man. It is built upon a more solid foundation—a foundation as enduring as the heavens themselves. He never intended to teach that He would build His church upon that individual named Peter, or upon any others whom fallible men might elect as his successors. Every one who exercises his rationality in matters of religion knows this. How, then, is the declaration in our text to be understood? What is its true spiritual import as unfolded in the revelations made for the New Church?

"And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter." *Petros*, which is the Greek word for Peter, means a *stone*, or *rock*. But the Lord no more intended to declare that Peter was, literally, a rock, than that He would build His church upon that particular individual. All the proper names of Scripture are significative. They denote certain principles—certain mental or spiritual qualities. Therefore they stand not merely for individuals but for classes of individuals—for all who are of the quality, or are grounded in the principle, denoted by the name. Peter signifies the principle of faith—faith especially in the Divine Humanity. For this is the faith which the particular individual here mentioned had just confessed. For being questioned by the Saviour as to who He was, he answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." These words, spiritually interpreted, are an acknowledgment of the Divine Humanity. (*Anointed, Son of the living God.*) Whereupon the Saviour says to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven"—a declaration which not only admits the truth of what Peter had confessed, but shows that it is truth such as no unaided human intelligence could discover—such as could only be revealed by the Heavenly Father to those who are in states to receive it (*Simon Bar-jona*).

Peter, then, in the instance before us, denotes the great truth which that individual had just acknowledged, that the Lord's Humanity was Divine; or that Christ was the Incarnate Word—the very Divine Wisdom in human form, brought down and accommodated to our finite capacities; and that within Him dwelt the Divine Love in all its fulness; that He was "Immanuel, God with us"—the Being in whom, as the apostle declares, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." This is a cardinal truth in the Christian system. It lies at the very foundation of our religion. All that there is of the true church in man rests on this. Therefore the Lord, identifying Peter with the principle that he represented, or the truth that he had just acknowledged, says, in addition to the blessing that He pronounced upon him, "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

A *rock* denotes truth; and when used for a foundation, it denotes truth that is fundamental, and that gives support to other truths and to the minds that receive them. Hence the Lord is Himself called a Rock, a Stone, a Foundation. "Unto thee will I cry," says the Psalmist, "O Lord, my Rock." And in Isaiah we read: "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God—Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a Stone, a tried Stone, a precious Corner Stone, a sure Foundation."

It is not, then, upon any man or any number of men that the Lord promises to build His church; but upon that great truth concerning Himself, which Peter confessed when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." But the subject needs further elucidation in order that it may be seen in rational light—that whatever there is of the true church in man rests upon the acknowledgment of the Divine Humanity.

Every building must have a foundation or it cannot stand. This is not less true of Divine, than of human structures. And the noblest of all Divine structures—that which surpasses in grandeur and glory all planetary and stellar worlds—is the regenerate human soul, whether viewed individually or collectively. "Ye are God's building," says the apostle to the church at Corinth. And again he says: "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." The church, then, is God's building. The regenerate soul is His holy temple. And what is the foundation of this building? Upon what is the true church of the Lord in man built? Every renewed soul knows that it is upon the acknowledgment of the Lord Himself—not of the lips merely, but in heart and life. How can there be any church where there is not this acknowledgment? What other foundation can it rest upon? For love to the Lord is the essential constituent of the church. The first of all the commandments is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." But how can men love One whose every existence they do not acknowledge?

Without an acknowledgment of the Lord, therefore, there can be no love and no worship of Him. Nor will those who fail to acknowledge Him be likely to think that they receive anything from Him? How can they? They will look upon whatever there is good and true in their minds as self-derived. They will regard all their mental and bodily powers as their own, which they have a right to employ for mere self-gratification. They will consider themselves as independent beings, accountable to no will above their own, for they own no superior. They cannot acknowledge the divinity of the Word, and will, therefore, feel under no obligations to obey the Word. They will *not* obey it, because to do so will require the exercise of self-denial.

Now a person in this state, acknowledging no will above his own, will at all times feel at liberty to do, and will do, only his own will. He will act from self and for the sake of self. And when this is the case, when a man regards as self-derived the things which he receives from the Lord, he changes their quality—converts them into their opposites. He converts the

Lord's love into self-love, which is hatred toward all who do not favor him; and His wisdom into self-derived intelligence, which is spiritual insanity. In such a man, what is there of heaven or the church? His ruling love is supremely selfish. His character is of infernal type. Nor can anything of the church be built up within him, so long as he continues to acknowledge and worship only himself. The foundation of the essential things of the church is wanting, where there is no acknowledgment of the Lord as the Source of all that constitutes the church.

But before we can truly acknowledge the Lord, we need to know who He is. For how can we acknowledge One of whom we know nothing? And our acknowledgment will, of course, be according to what we believe or know concerning Him. If our idea of God be vague, shadowy, and indistinct, our acknowledgment of Him will be proportionably imperfect. If our idea of Him be false, our acknowledgment of Him cannot be true. Thus, if we think of Him as merely a subtle and shapeless essence diffused through boundless space, we do not acknowledge a conscious, intelligent, *personal* God. And if we attempt to worship such a Deity, we worship we know not what. When we pray, our mental eye rests on no distinct Being or Person, but looks out into infinite space and sees—nothing. What, then, is the God we worship, but an interior principle of nature,—impersonal, unintelligent? And what is this but atheism? And where atheism exists, what is there for the essential things of the Lord's church to rest upon?

Or, if we think of God as a partial, despotic, revengeful, vindictive Being, as rewarding His friends and punishing His enemies, as conferring favors on those who please Him, and burning with anger toward those who displease Him, as acting arbitrarily, without reason and against reason, what do we then but acknowledge an almighty tyrant?—a Being whose power and vengeance we may dread, but whose character and attributes we cannot love? And how can the essential things of the church be built upon the acknowledgment of *such* a God? Our idea of Him is false; and what but a false or spurious church can be built on such a foundation?

Thus we see how needful it was that God should come and reveal Himself personally unto men. Otherwise, on account of the moral darkness induced by sin, we never should have known Him. True, the Jews acknowledged and worshiped Jehovah; but they had no correct idea of Him whom they professed to serve. The Being whom they understood and designated by this name, how far removed was He in disposition and character from the true and living God! He was a Being endowed with all the passions and frailties of sinful men—partial, vindictive, proud, and selfish. But in order that the true God might be known, and that a true church might be built upon the acknowledgment and worship of Him, He came and manifested Himself to the eyes of men in the human form. In the person of the Lord Jesus Christ we behold our Heavenly Father. For in Him, as saith the apostle, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," is His own declaration.

In Him all the powers and perfections of the Divine Being, as exercised in the redemption and salvation of man, are distinctly visible. In Him the Divine and the Human are brought as one; for all the infinite excellences of the Divine Being are here brought down and adapted to man's finite capacities. They are here presented in that accommodated form in which alone they can become distinct objects of thought and affection. For the Infinite cannot be comprehended or received by the finite, save as it first becomes finited. In the Lord Jesus Christ we behold everything of true humanity—all that can claim our highest love, all that constitutes angelic life, all that can make us truly human, all that is worthy the adoration of men and angels. And if we would receive from Him angelic life, we must look to Him and follow after Him, and so open our hearts to its reception. To cite His own divine words: "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." "Come unto me, all ye that labor," etc. "For without me ye can do nothing." In the person of Jesus Christ we behold an incarnation of the Divine Love. In Him the Father is brought forth to view. We here learn something of the nature of the Divine through its manifestations in the human. We see with what meekness and patience and forbearance and gentleness it endures mockings, scourgings, and the cruelest persecutions. We see it resisting and scorning the lures of the tempter, overcoming the powers of darkness, subjugating all evil inclinations to its benign control, and thus redeeming humanity from the power of hell. And seeing what the Divine Love once did, we learn what that Love is now and always doing for man's salvation.

Thus we behold in the Lord Jesus Christ our only God and Saviour. As saith the prophet Isaiah: "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord," etc. We see Him not only as the God that *did* redeem and save, but, what is still more interesting and encouraging, we see Him as the God that is now and always redeeming and saving all who humbly acknowledge and faithfully follow after Him. We see not only what He once did in His assumed human form more than eighteen hundred years ago, but we see how that glorious work is connected with what He is now and always doing in and for all who acknowledge the Divinity in Humanity, and shun evils as sins.

Moreover, an acknowledgment of the Divine Humanity, or that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God," involves an acknowledgment of the essential divinity of the Word, and of all that the Lord did while fulfilling the Word, or glorifying His Human; —yes, and of all that He does in and for those who follow Him in the regeneration. It involves also an acknowledgment that all our ability to understand truth, and all our power and disposition to shun evil and do good, is from Him; and that without Him we can do nothing. This acknowledgment is the very foundation of all angelic dispositions and feelings—yes, of all that there is of heaven and the church in man. *Upon this rock*, therefore, must the Lord's church be built in every mind. And when built upon this, it will assuredly stand. For where there is this acknowledgment, there is the absence of all self-righteousness. Self is deposed and renounced. We claim no merit to ourselves for shunning evil or doing good, but humbly ascribe to the Lord all the honor and the glory. And since all evil has its origin in the love of self, therefore in the degree that this love is overcome, evil is removed; the power of hell is diminished; evil spirits cannot harm us while we look to the Lord and acknowledge Him in His Divine Humanity. They cannot rob us of any heavenly treasures which we do not claim as our own. They cannot overthrow or undermine any good principles within us which we humbly ascribe to the Lord Jesus. They are powerless against us so long as we are sensible that we have no strength of our own to combat them, so long as we feel, and from the heart acknowledge, and love to acknowledge, that all our power to resist their malign influence is every moment given us of the Lord. This humble acknowledgment of the Divine Humanity, therefore, or of the supreme and everlasting Father revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, is our sure defense and shield against the assaults of infernal spirits. On this acknowledgment rest the simplicity and innocence and strength of heaven—yea, the innocence and strength of every regenerate soul. This is the rock on which Christ's church is built. And when built on this, no power on earth or under the earth can shake or disturb it. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

II.

FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHECY, "BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW."

And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.—REV. XXI, 5.

The things which the Apostle John heard and saw, as recorded in the Revelation, were heard and seen in the spiritual world when his spiritual senses were opened. For he says that he heard and saw them when he was "in the spirit," and "a door was opened to him in heaven."

Every man has a spiritual body within his material body; and this spiritual body is endowed with senses, whereby he is made capable of hearing and seeing things in the spiritual world. But for wise and beneficent reasons these spiritual senses are ordinarily closed during man's life on earth; so that most people do not even know or believe that they have such senses. Yet they are capable of being opened in all men while in the flesh. And the experience of many individuals in every age and nation agrees with the recorded testimony of prophets and apostles in assuring us that these spiritual senses have repeatedly been opened in men. And when the spiritual senses of one who is in a heavenly state of mind are opened, he then may see the angels and the things by which they are surrounded, and may hear their voices, as plainly as we can see and hear persons in an adjacent room when a door of communication is opened between us and them, and we stand upon the threshold of that door. It was in this way, that is, by the opening of his spiritual senses, that a door was opened to the Seer of Patmos in heaven, so that he saw myriads of angels and heard their voices. It should never be forgotten that the door of communication with heaven is within the soul, because heaven itself is within.

And among the things which the Revelator saw when his spiritual senses were opened was a *throne* and One sitting thereon. " And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." And there were also seen round about the throne four and twenty elders, clothed in white raiment, and having on their heads crowns of gold. And these " fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." And there were seen also four living creatures full of eyes before and behind; and these " give glory and honor and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever"—resting not day and night, but saying: " Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." And there were seen and heard a host of angels, "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Add to this, also, that the very first time the Revelator was in the spirit (it was on the Lord's day) he "heard behind him a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last." And when he turned to see from whom the voice came, he saw "One like unto the Son of Man," standing in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, and holding in His right hand seven stars; "and out of His mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword; and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." And when John fell at His feet as dead, He laid His right hand upon him, saying, "Fear not; I am the First and the Last." And then, among other things, He proclaimed these words in the Revelator's ears: "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."

How wonderfully and beautifully significant is all this! How full, clear, and emphatic is its teaching! How plainly does it set before us the Lord Jesus Christ as the true and only proper object of religious worship! The veil is lifted from before the prophet's eye—the light of the upper spheres streams in upon him—the history of the church is unrolled before him, page after page, until the time of her consummation, when moral darkness hung over her like night, and "the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together;" when "the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth." And as the last crowning act in the drama, he sees a new heaven and a new earth, and the Holy City, New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. And in the midst of this grand panoramic display, the prophet sees one like unto the Son of Man, at first in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; afterward seated upon the throne, and surrounded by myriads of adoring angels, who sing with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory, and blessing."

How plainly does all this teach us that Jesus Christ is the central Luminary of the church! And in the church of the future,—in that happy era when the tabernacle of God shall be with men,—Christians will think of no other, talk of no other, pray to no other God than Jesus Christ; that He alone will be seated upon the throne and will be acknowledged as King of Kings and Lord of Lords; that around Him as a common and living Center all faithful souls will cluster and revolve, and all the adoration, love, and praise that human hearts can give will be given to Him alone.

It is plain, therefore, who is meant by *Him that sat upon the throne.* It is the Lord Jesus Christ; for under the New Dispensation, whose advent the Revelator foretold, He is exalted as the supreme and only God, the Law-giver, King, and Judge of the moral universe.

All things in the spiritual world have a meaning. They are all representative and significative. They all exist according to the same great law which determines the literal sense of the Word—the law of correspondence. John saw a *throne*, and by a *throne* is denoted government and judgment, judgment performed according to truth. This is the spiritual idea represented and signified by a *throne*. Hence in familiar discourse among men on earth, the word *throne* is often employed to denote the supreme authority of a country, or the laws according to which its civil affairs are administered and judgment executed, as the throne of England, or the throne of France. To *sit upon the throne* signifies to exercise supreme authority, or to execute judgment. And the reason why the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Truth itself and the righteous Judge of all hearts, was seen seated upon a throne, is, that He was in due time to execute a judgment upon those in the world of spirits and in the Church on earth by means of a new dispensation of truth from Himself. He was to come again, according to His own prediction, not into the ultimates of nature as at His first advent, but into the understandings and hearts of men, with the power and great glory of his unsealed Word; was to come with truth of a purer and more interior character, and capable of exploring the interiors of men's minds, and determining the real quality of their hearts. And as a consequence of this new revelation, new states of life were to be developed, a new order of things instituted in the world of spirits, a new heaven of angels formed from the faithful, and as a result of this, a New Christian Church on earth; that is, new and higher views of Christian truth were to be communicated, and new and higher states of Christian life to be developed. Hence the declaration of Him who sat upon the throne, "Behold, I make all things new."

Not in reference to the physical, but in reference to the moral or human world is this announcement made. The Scripture, rightly interpreted, never has any reference to the outward world of matter, but always to the inner world of mind. As man, created in God's own image, was the end for which this outer world was created, so He is the end for which the Scripture was given; and it is of Him and His relation to the Heavenly Father that the Scripture in its true sense everywhere speaks. And as man, rightly viewed, is a spiritual being, therefore the Scripture treats altogether of spiritual things, of spiritual laws, and spiritual states. And whenever it makes mention of natural things—of the earth and the heavens, of sun, moon, and stars—it uses them merely as symbols of something spiritual. In no other way could the Divine Word be written, or spiritual truth be communicated to men, except under the drapery of natural objects and events.

In the commencement of the chapter from which our text is taken, mention is made of the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, and the passing away of the former heaven and earth. It is on account of the sensualism in which the human mind has become immersed that this language has been so generally understood by Christians as referring to the visible and material heavens and earth. But in the spiritual sense, by the former *heaven* is meant that imaginary heaven which Christians had formed to themselves in the world of spirits prior to the year 1757; and which, because it *was* an imaginary and not a true heaven—not founded upon true doctrine nor upon any deep and enduring basis of Christian life and character—was destined in the order of Providence to pass away. And by the former *earth* is meant the Church on earth, which was in conjunction or consociation with that imaginary heaven in the world of spirits and formed one with it. And because that heaven was not a true heaven, nor that Church a true Church, therefore both were doomed; both were destined to pass away; both *did* pass away at the time of the Last Judgment. And a new angelic heaven was formed from the faithful, and has ever since been increasing and perfecting; and a new Christian Church began on earth and is still in progress. And by a new Christian Church is meant not simply a new ecclesiastical organization, with new doctrines, a new ritual, and a new priesthood, but something broader and more significant. A New Church means a New Age, an Age characterized by a new spirit, swayed by new motives, burning with new desires, kindled with new hopes, illumined with new truths, gladdened with new freedom. It means a new state of Christian thought and life, and liberty and love. Such is the new heaven and the new earth foretold by the Revelator, taking the place of the former heaven and the former earth that passed away simultaneously a century ago.

"Behold, I make all things new." All spiritual things—all things pertaining to the Christian religion as hitherto understood and interpreted—all interior things belonging to the Church of Christ, its doctrine, its spirit, its life—these were to be made new at Christ's second coming. And as all inferior human interests—all civil government, social order, educational methods, and industrial processes are the normal outgrowths of the more interior states of the Church—its doctrines and its life—therefore these also would necessarily be made new at the Lord's second coming.

The first thing made new in the Church by the second advent is the doctrine concerning the Lord Himself. The doctrine of the Divine Humanity—the doctrine which presents Jesus Christ as the true and only God and the only proper Object of religious worship,—is to theology what the sun is to our planetary system. It is central to all other doctrines; it irradiates them all; it vitalizes them all; it produces harmony among them all; it reveals the relative position and importance of each. Instead of three centers, which sooner or later must result in *no* center, the Church of the New Jerusalem has one only center—Christ. He is now revealed as the manifested Jehovah—the central Light and Life of the Church—Immanuel—God with us.

And this central doctrine being itself new—new, I mean, to Christians of the eighteenth century—must produce by a strict logical necessity an entire new system of theology. It must modify or make new all other doctrines; and so, indeed, it does. For in the doctrines of the New Jerusalem, which all radiate from this common center and beautifully cohere with it, we are presented with new views of the Word or Sacred

Scripture; new views of the atonement, redemption, regeneration, faith, charity; new views of the nature and purpose of the Lord's second death; new views of the resurrection and the judgment; new views of heaven, hell, and the life after death. And these new views are steadily and silently working their way into the understandings and hearts of Christians everywhere. Men *think* very differently on religious subjects now from what they did a hundred years ago. Their creeds, indeed, are for the most part the same—and so, to outward appearance, the churches are the same; but inwardly they are very different—inwardly they are all being made new. Men have different views on all theological and ethical questions. How many Christians now-a-days really expect to be saved by faith alone! Are not all beginning to think more and more of the necessity of a good life? How many believe the old doctrines of infant damnation, imputed righteousness, unconditional election and reprobation, or a hell of material fire and brimstone, like that preached a century ago? These things, it is true, stand written in the creeds now as then. But they are not among men's real beliefs—certainly not among their deep heart-convictions as they once were. So surely has come to pass and so obvious is its fulfilment to the most casual observer, what the illuminated Swedenborg wrote a hundred years ago, when he said: "Hereafter the Church will be similar indeed in the outward form, but dissimilar in the inward;" and the reason he assigned was, that "henceforth the man of the Church will be in a more free state of thinking on matters of faith, because spiritual liberty has been restored to him." This, then, is the all-sufficient reason of the changed and continually changing condition of the churches, viewed internally—the greater freedom of thought on matters of faith which all enjoy.

However, then, the written creeds of the churches may remain unchanged, the deep heart-convictions of all the Lord's faithful followers are not what they were. Christians everywhere are receiving new and higher views of truth. And thus, in respect to the doctrinal beliefs of the churches, the declaration, "Behold, I make all things new," has been receiving its fulfilment for the last hundred years.

And the churches are being made new in spirit not less than in doctrine. Among all the best minds in Christendom, no matter what their creeds, the old, hard, sectarian, exclusive, intolerant, and persecuting spirit is dying out—is condemned as a spirit that cometh not from above but from beneath; and a new and totally different spirit is taking its place—a spirit more mild, just, tolerant, and charitable—more akin to the spirit that reigns in heaven. I do not mean that no heresy hunters or persecutors for opinion's sake are to be found now in the churches; but they are not now, as formerly, among the most influential and respectable class of Christians, but commonly reckoned among the meanest and most anti-Christian. The best minds everywhere are beginning to see, and practically to acknowledge, that perfect agreement in all the details of religious thought is a thing neither to be expected nor desired;—that unity of spirit is quite compatible with diversity of belief, provided always there be an agreement in fundamentals.

And thus, along with the new religious views—the new intellectual convictions at which Christians are gradually arriving, a new spirit—a new life—is descending into the heart of humanity, warming, expanding, purifying, and slowly lifting it up to loftier and serener heights. It is the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ—the spirit of Him who, seated upon the throne, is proclaiming in the ears of the nations, "Behold, I make all things new."

And as religion is the highest of all human interests—religious truth the highest truth, and religious life the highest life—so any change or newness here cannot but produce a corresponding change or newness in all subordinate human interests—just as any radical change in a man's interior convictions is sure to produce a corresponding change in his outward conduct. And who that looks at Christendom as it was a hundred years ago—prior to the second advent—and Christendom as it is to-day cannot see that in all the subsidiary though less important and vital human interests stupendous changes have taken place, which nothing less than a new dispensation of truth from heaven can adequately account for? Who cannot see that in science, philosophy, literature, art, commerce, forms of government, modes of education, industrial processes—in short, everything pertaining to man's temporal welfare, the Lord has been making all things new?

Is it not strange that, while the prophecies concerning the Lord's second advent are receiving their fulfilment before the eyes of the world, so few recognize the fact, or believe that we are really living under a New Dispensation!

But our text has an immediate and specific application to every regenerating soul, as well as to the Church in general, which I proceed briefly to consider. Whatever is made new in the Church in general is simply the result, or rather the aggregate, of the new states or new creations in individual minds; for the Church in general is made up of individuals. And before Christ can make all things new in any soul, He must Himself be seated on the throne within that soul. He must be acknowledged as Lawgiver, King, and Judge—as having an exclusive and divine right to rule and reign in our hearts. And then we must show ourselves His loyal subjects by the cheerful surrender of our wills to His and reverently obeying His precepts. When Christ is thus enthroned in the heart, a renewing process straightway commences through the power and operation of His blessed spirit. Old things begin to pass away and all things to be made new within us. The old hereditary affections, having their root in the loves of self and the world, begin to give place to new spiritual affections which have respect to the Lord and the neighbor. Instead of thinking (as in our natural state we do) that we live of ourselves and should live for the sake of ourselves, we come to think and believe that our life is all from the Lord, and should be religiously devoted to His service—that is, to the good of the neighbor. Instead of the old hereditary feelings of pride and self-exaltation, we come to have new feelings of humility, and of dependence on the Lord for all that makes life pleasant and happy. Instead of the old hereditary longing to be the greatest and to rule over others, we begin meekly and humbly to desire the office of servants—to desire that we may render the greatest possible service to others; agreeable to these words of the Lord: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Instead of acting in accordance with the old hereditary prompting, from a supreme regard to ourselves and the world, we come to act from a principle of love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor. Instead of making the honors and emoluments of the world our chief end and aim, we come to seek, as of first importance, the kingdom of God and His righteousness; we come to regard the shunning of evils as sins, and thereby the deliverance of our souls from infernal bondage, as life's first, great, and paramount purpose.

And thus it is, when Christ is acknowledged as He is now revealed—our sovereign Lord and King—when He is duly exalted in our thoughts and affections, His Word enthroned in our minds as supreme above all else, acknowledged as the rightful Judge of all our actions, the sovereign rule by which we are to live, then we experience the fulfilment of the declaration, "Behold, I make all things new." We are, indeed, or we begin to be, a new creation. We have new thoughts, new feelings, new dispositions, new desires, new motives, new principles of action, new ends and aims of life. The spirit of Christ moving over the face of that fearful abyss within us brings light out of darkness, order out of confusion; imparts beauty, joy, and life where before were desolation, sorrow, and death; creates a new world—a new heaven and a new earth—within us; converts our wilderness into an Eden, our desert into a garden of the Lord. Verily, old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

This is the Lord's truth—truth to be pondered, truth to be remembered, truth to be deeply engraven upon the heart—that all things are made new within the minds of those who duly acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ and humbly bow their wills to His. Therefore the Revelator adds:—

"And He said unto me, write; for these words are true and faithful." To *write*, in the spiritual sense, is to record on the inner spiritual memory—to engrave upon the living tablet of the heart. And when any truth is received, understood, and obeyed, it is thus written; it is registered on the internal memory, and so becomes of the life. And when the Lord's words are *thus* written, we know that they are *true* and *faithful.* We know, from their illuminating and wisdom-giving power, that they are His words, and therefore *true.* And we know, from their warming and love-enkindling influence, that they are full of the Lord's own love, and therefore *faithful.*

III.

DESCENT OF THE NEW JERUSALEM.

And I, John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.—REV. XXI, 2.

This language, like all the language of Holy Scripture, is symbolic. And the heavenly significance of the symbol may now be understood by all who really desire to understand it. It may be seen, in the light of the New Dispensation, that not any natural or material city is to be understood by the New Jerusalem here spoken of. Consequently we are not to think of the descent of any such city through natural space when we read of its coming down from God out of heaven; but we are to think of the spiritual things symbolized by this city and its descent from God.

In the symbolic language of the Bible, God is often called the Most High, and is said to dwell *on high.* Accordingly, whatever blessings He bestows on the children of men are said to *come down* from Him. Thus the Apostle James says: "Every good and every perfect gift is *from above,* and *cometh down* from the Father of lights." Surely, it cannot be said that all our good gifts—our gifts of body and of mind—come down through natural space. Bodily health and vigor, reason, understanding, memory, and affection do not come down in that sense—*i. e.*, through space. It is not, therefore, in the natural sense, or with any reference to natural space, that God is called the Most High; for He is in all *places* alike—in the lowest as well as the highest—in the depths of the earth as truly as in the heights of the air or in the stars.

But in the spiritual sense, that is, with reference to state, God is the *Most High*, for space corresponds to state. He is high above the earth and the heavens—infinitely exalted above men and angels. We say of a wise and good man that he is a person of *superior* character, of *exalted* worth, of a *lofty* mind, etc.,—or that he is *high* above another who is ignorant and selfish. And this familiar use of language is sufficient to show us what moral or spiritual elevation is, and why God is called the *Most High* in Scripture, and why heaven is said to be *on high*, and man *lower* than the angels.

All words and expressions in Scripture which in their natural sense refer to space and change of place—such as high and low, ascending and descending, entering in and going out, departing from and following after—in their spiritual sense denote state and changes of state. And the reason is because space corresponds to state. Space belongs to the realm of matter, but state to the realm of mind or spirit. Space, therefore, is predicated of the natural and state of the spiritual world. Our bodies dwell in space and pass through space; but our souls abide in a certain state, and pass from one state to another without any reference to space, as from a state of darkness to one of light, or from a state of joy to one of mourning. And as there is an infinity of space, so there is also an infinity of state.

Now, "God is Spirit"—and so, indeed, is the human soul, the real and essential man. Therefore space cannot be predicated of Him, and He is not to be thought of from space, or with any reference to space. And when He is spoken of in the Bible as the Most High and as dwelling on high, this language is to be understood spiritually. As to all that constitutes our proper humanity—as to wisdom, love, tenderness, mercy, compassion, long-suffering, forgiveness, all truly human attributes—God is, indeed, the Most High—infinitely exalted above men and angels. He is the inmost of all human and angelic love and wisdom—the central power and moving spring of all our noblest thoughts and best endeavors. Whatever, therefore, *comes down* from Him, comes down in the same sense that the counsel, encouragement, and help of wise and righteous men come down to the poor, the weak, the ignorant, and the degraded, or as the instruction of a wise and loving parent comes down to the states of his little children that need it.

John saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. But he saw this not with his natural, but with his spiritual eyes. He saw it in vision, or when, as he says, a door was opened to him in heaven. Thus he saw it in that spiritual realm, where all things that appear are of a representative or symbolic character. But John did not understand the meaning of this symbol. He only recorded what he saw. Nor could its meaning be understood until it was revealed by the Lord Himself; and this has now been done through the instrumentality of a man who was raised up and especially fitted for that purpose;—of a man whom the Lord graciously prepared by a long course of study and discipline, whose mind He illumined by His spirit in an extraordinary degree, and who was thus enabled to receive rationally, and to communicate to others, the spiritual sense of the Word. Previous to this, the spiritual significance of this symbol, as well as of all others in the Apocalypse and throughout the Scripture, was unknown to men. The written Word, or Book of God, was sealed with seven seals. "And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon" (that is, in the spiritual and heavenly contents thereof). But now, the Lord Jesus Christ, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof," agreeable to Divine promise. Now, the seals have been loosed. The Book of God, "written within and on the back side," has been opened, and men are permitted to look on the interior and heavenly things of the Divine Word. It was in view of this great event, so full of hope and promise to the world, that the shining hosts of heaven "fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

In the light of the spiritual sense of the Word as now revealed we may see what is signified by the city which the Seer of Patmos beheld in vision, what by its coming down from God out of heaven, and by its being prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and why John in preference to any other of the disciples should have been chosen to see this vision.

A *city* signifies the church in respect to its doctrine. This is the spiritual meaning of a city. The minds of the people who compose, or belong to, any particular church dwell together in the doctrine of that church, comparatively as the bodies of men dwell together in the same city. And the various truths of doctrine, whereby the members of any church are able to communicate or hold spiritual intercourse with each other, are the streets and lanes of the city. Different cities, of course, signify different doctrines, or different churches as to doctrine. The city of *Babylon* signifies any and every church which is in the lust of exercising dominion over the souls of men;—which seeks to suppress freedom of thought or freedom of utterance;—which endeavors, by various ecclesiastical contrivances or penalties, to compel assent to certain dogmas, instead of trying to lead men in freedom according to reason. Such a church is denoted by Babylon. And as the Roman Catholic Church has been, and is, preëminently in this lust of spiritual dominion, therefore that church more especially is what is signified by Babylon. (*But all who have that spirit, whatever name they bear, are Babylonians.*)

By the city of *Jerusalem* is denoted the true church as to its doctrine; for there in Jerusalem were the Jewish temple and altar. There the sacrifices were offered and the religious festivals held. There also the Lord taught in the temple, and there He endured the last temptation, whereby the victory over the hells was complete and His humanity fully glorified. Therefore that city represented the church as to all that pertains to its doctrine and worship—for worship is ever according to doctrine.

That Jerusalem has this spiritual meaning in the sacred Scripture, or is used to signify the church, is plain from many passages: as where it is said, "The Lord will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain." "And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy; even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem." "The law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together." "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that do love thee." "At that day they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem; neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil hearts." "Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams."

Who cannot see that these things could never be predicated of that ancient city Jerusalem, nor of any natural city? No; they are predicated of that whereof Jerusalem was the outward representative or divinely chosen symbol—the Lord's true church. It is the church —not in any narrow sense, as consisting of this or that particular sect or denomination, who claim the exclusive right to the title, but the church in the broad and true sense, as consisting of all God's people of every name—all who receive truth into their understandings and embody it in their lives; this it is which is to be called "the city of truth," "the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain." It is this in the midst of which, it is said, the Lord "will dwell." It is this unto which all nations (that is, all who are in good, which is what is signified by nations) will be "gathered." It is this that is builded "as a city that is compact together." It is this for whose peace and prosperity we should strive and pray. This is the Jerusalem which is to be forever watered and refreshed by the river of God, where "the glorious Jehovah will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams."

It is plain enough, then, what is to be understood by the Holy City, *New Jerusalem*, which John saw coming down from God out of heaven. This was the symbol, or representative image, of that New Christian Church to be established by the Lord at the end of the former church; not of the church as consisting of *people*, for it is not these that come down from God out of heaven, but of the church as to doctrine. This city symbolizes, and therefore signifies, the doctrine of the New Church. It is called *the holy* city, because the doctrine of this church is full of the light and life of the Lord, who is holiness itself. It was seen coming down from God out of heaven; and by this was represented and signified that the doctrine of this church is not the mere offspring of human intelligence, not a system contrived by any wit or wisdom, but revealed by the Lord Himself from out the internal or heavenly sense of His Word. The doctrine of this New Church, signified by the New Jerusalem, is heavenly doctrine. It is the very doctrine according to which the angels live, and through the knowledge of which, and a life according to it, men may become angels. It is such doctrine as is contained in the interior or higher sense of God's Word,—higher, that is, than the literal sense. And the revealing of this doctrine, or bringing it down to man's state of reception—unfolding and presenting it in a form to be rationally apprehended—is one of the ways in which the event foreshadowed in our text is fulfilled. It is, indeed, the first way; for before men can be led to higher states of good or love, it is necessary that they should receive higher and purer truths of doctrine. Thus the New Jerusalem was seen descending first as a city, to denote that the *doctrine* of the New Church was to be first revealed and understood; or that the first manifestation of this church would be the breaking forth of new light, the dawn of a new and brighter day, or the revelation of higher and purer religious doctrine. This is according to divine order.

In all healthy moral or spiritual growth, truth of doctrine is the first thing needed. In order that we may see and acknowledge our evils, individual or social, we must have the light of truth to reveal their existence. No individual ever got rid of an evil until he had first been brought to see and acknowledge that he was in that evil. And social evils are gotten rid of in no other way. Men are led by truth of doctrine to the good of life. This is the true and orderly way. Therefore the first symbol of the New Church and its descent among men, which discloses itself to the seer of Patmos, was the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, whereby we are taught that heavenly doctrine was first to be revealed from the Word, or unfolded and brought down to men's rational apprehension.

But the doctrines of the New Jerusalem contained in the spiritual sense of the Word are all of them doctrines of life. They are doctrines according to which the angels live, and are therefore called heavenly doctrines. They teach us what true human life is, and what are its chief delights, and how that life is to be developed and formed in us. They teach us who the proper Object of worship is, and in what manner He is truly worshiped. They teach us how the angels think in regard to the Lord, and how they feel and act toward Him and toward one another. They teach us what is spiritual good and what spiritual evil; thus, what is the essential nature of heaven and of hell, and how the joys of the one are to be secured, and the sorrows of the other to be escaped. They show us where and what we all are by inheritance; why it is necessary to be born again before we can enter the kingdom of heaven; what is the nature of this second birth, and in what manner or by what process it takes place;—in short, they teach us all that we need to know concerning our highest life, the life of heaven.

These heavenly doctrines are first to be admitted into the understanding. They are to be seen and acknowledged as true, and thus to be received rationally. Then they are to be religiously applied to life. They are to be brought down into all public and private relations, into our civil, social, commercial, industrial, and domestic affairs; brought down into the family, exalting the relation between husband and wife, making it more sweet and beautiful; between parent and child, making it more tender and endearing; brought down into the school, making it a little heaven on earth, by purifying and ennobling the motives of the teachers, and filling their hearts with sweetest love; brought down into industrial affairs, inspiring the artisan with the noble ambition of doing his work honestly and well as in the fear of the Lord; brought down into trade, driving thence all frauds, and lies, and dishonorable shifts resorted to from love of gain; brought down into politics, cleansing and clarifying those turbid waters, and making them sweet and healthful to bathe in; brought down into legislative halls, producing just and equal laws, and aiming especially to shield and uplift the weak; brought down into society, banishing thence all falsehood and deceit, all empty show and pretense, all cunning and artifice, introducing simplicity in tastes, manners, and habits, sincerity and cordiality into all social intercourse; brought down into every region of the natural mind of each individual receiver, subduing there all pride, avarice, ambition, and self-seeking, and introducing humility, sincerity, gentleness, and disinterested neighborly love.

When the doctrines of the New Jerusalem or the truths of the spiritual sense of the Word shall be thus brought down into the life, when they shall repress all falsehood and evil in individuals and communities, and mould society to the temper and likeness of heaven, then will the New Church appear in her beauty, arrayed in her bridal robes, all glorious in her apparel, beautiful as a bride adorned for her husband. This is what the Lord earnestly desires and seeks. This is the way this New Church will one day appear. When her doctrines shall not only be received into the understanding, but into the will; when they shall be brought down into all the acts and relations of our every-day life, guiding our thoughts, chastening our feelings, purifying our affections, and governing our actions;—then will the Father's will be done on the earth as it is done in the heavens; then will be fulfilled those prophetic words which John heard from heaven, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God;" then will have arrived that glorious day foretold by the Prophet Isaiah, when "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." Then will the earth and the heavens be one—the church below be joined to the church above, and both united in blissful marriage union with the Lord. Then will have come the time which the angelic throng, foreseeing, hailed with rapture when they sang with a loud voice, "as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia! for the Lord God," etc. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready."

This more advanced and perfected state of the New Church was represented, in the Apocalyptic vision, by a virgin or bride. Therefore this church was at first seen as a city, for the church descends first as to doctrine; and afterward as "a bride adorned for her husband;" for such, indeed, the church becomes the Lord's own bride, the wife of the Lamb, as the heavenly doctrines are brought down into the life, and all the motives, dispositions, and feelings of the heart brought into conformity therewith.

This state of virgin innocence and purity and love, represented by a "bride adorned for her husband," the New Church has not yet reached. As yet it is descending as a city, and even under this form it is seen by only a few; for only those can see it in all its magnificent proportions—that is, can understand and cordially receive the heavenly doctrines—who are in the good of life, who are willing and anxious to do the will of the Lord. As saith the Divine Truth itself: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Therefore the vision of the holy city descending from God out of heaven was vouchsafed to John, the beloved disciple, in preference to any of the rest; for by John was represented all who are in the good of life, all who are anxious to do the will of the Lord as they understand it. All such are disciples whom Jesus loves and whose heads repose on the bosom of the Master.

Although that virgin state of the church denoted by the bride is not yet reached, we are, it is to be hoped, advancing toward it. Every unhallowed propensity which we as individuals resist and overcome, every evil which we shun as a sin against God, every falsehood that is bravely met and battered down, every hurtful prejudice that is conquered and removed out of the way, every unequal and unjust law that is erased from the statute book, every false and pernicious principle that is exposed and uprooted in Church or State, is a step in that direction.

God help us—each one in his respective sphere—to be instrumental in hastening the day when His own tabernacle shall be with men and all people shall be His people; when the New Jerusalem shall appear appareled in robes of righteousness, decked in the shining graces of heaven, " beautiful as a bride adorned for her husband."

IV.

THE BREAD OF LIFE.

Then said Jesus unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.—JOHN VI, 32–35.

How plain is it from the entire chapter in which these words occur that the Lord is here speaking of spiritual things! And that, before we can arrive at His real meaning, His language must be spiritually interpreted! When He speaks of the true bread from heaven, how plain is it that He means bread for the soul; and when He speaks of the life which this bread gives, that He means spiritual or the truly human, not the corporeal, life! So when He speaks of coming to Him, He means a spiritual coming; and when He speaks of hunger and thirst, He means a hunger and thirst of the soul for the true and living bread.

Yet the Jews, and even His chosen disciples, failed to comprehend His meaning. They interpreted His words in a carnal manner. And when He told them that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood, else they could have no life, the Jews asked: "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" And the disciples themselves thought it a hard saying. But it was hard simply because they did not understand the spiritual significance of His language. And when Jesus perceived the carnal interpretation which they put upon His words, He said, "It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." This is what we should always seek after in the Lord's words—their spirit and life; and these are always to be found within or above the meaning of the letter, as the soul is within or above the material body.

Bread is a term used to denote all kinds of bodily nourishment. And in its spiritual sense it is used to denote whatever feeds and nourishes the soul. As the health and strength of our bodies require that they be fed every day, so our souls require daily nourishment that they may be healthy and strong. But the food adapted to the nourishment of the soul must be spiritual in its nature, because the soul itself is spiritual. It must be something addressed to the head and the heart, something suited to nourish the intellectual and emotional part of our nature,—the understanding and the will, for these constitute the man. And the Scripture teaches us that man, that is, the real, spiritual man, lives "by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The words which proceed out of the mouth of God are the truths of divine revelation, they are the laws of the soul's true life—the laws of unselfish love. These truths or laws are to be first learned or received into the memory; then they are to be seen in rational light or admitted into the understanding; then they are to be applied to life, that is, they are to control and regulate our dispositions and feelings, and to guide and govern us in all our actions. In this way these truths become the laws of our spiritual life; become incorporated with our spiritual being, as material nourishment becomes incorporated with the substance of our bodies; and the good of the Lord's love, which is the inmost essence and life of these truths, is received into our wills and is felt as pure and unselfish love—a sweet and heavenly delight.

This is *the true bread from heaven*—the bread whereon the angels live. This is the way in which all souls are fed and nourished who are growing to be like the angels.

And since all truly human thoughts and feelings, all the good and truth of both the incarnate and the written Word, are from the Lord's divine and infinite love, as all material food comes from or is produced mediately by the heat of the sun, therefore it is said that "the Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." By *the Father* is meant the Lord in respect to His divine love. This love is divine substance. It is the *only* substance there is in the universe; and the nourishment which it supplies to the soul is as much more substantial than material food as the soul itself is more substantial than the body.

And although this bread of heaven is spoken of as *given* by the Heavenly Father, yet it is not to be thought of as something apart or separate from the Lord. We are to regard it, on the contrary, as inseparably united to Him, just as the heat and light of the sun are inseparably bound to that luminary. We are to think of the Lord Himself as present in all spiritual nourishment, its very substance and life, and continually imparting to it all its life-giving power. Nay, we should think of this nourishment as the Lord Himself brought down to our needs, veiled and accommodated to our states of reception. As He says: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven." And when we are receiving or learning spiritual truth, and learning to bring into subjection to it all the feelings and dispositions of our hearts, whereby alone we can receive the good of love in truth, we are then partaking of the living bread from heaven; yea, we are eating Him who alone is Life. Therefore He says again: "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." It is important to remember this; otherwise, though we eat the bread of heaven, it will not be to us "the bread of life," nor will it nourish in us the life of heaven. Hence we read in the next verse:—

"For the bread of God is He that cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world." The bread of God is the divine substance and life, the love and wisdom of God, or the good and truth of His holy Word. This is the food of angels. This feeds and nourishes the souls of men. This gives them life—true, spiritual life. But the Word of the Lord, or the divine spirit in the Word, is not something separate from the Lord. Therefore it is said that this bread is Himself: "The bread of God is He that cometh down from heaven." In the person of Jesus Christ, the essential divine love and wisdom became clothed with a natural humanity. In Him, therefore, the bread of God came down even to the sensuous plane of human life, to the lowest possible condition of humanity. It veiled and accommodated itself to all human states. It performed acts of redemption for all men in all states. And henceforth, through the medium of glorified Humanity, it is able to come down to the lowest states of all finite minds.

The Word of God in its lowest sense is adapted or comes down to men in their lowest states, though in its higher senses it contains wisdom for the highest angels. And because the Lord is the Word, and at His advent fulfilled all things of the Word, therefore He is now able to fill with His own divine life every degree of truth in the minds of recipient subjects. He comes down, through the medium of His Word, in a form accommodated to men's various states of reception. In every state in which we receive truth and experience any of its transforming and renewing power, we should remember that the truth with its influent life is not something separate from the Lord. It is the Lord Himself come down to us, and performing for us and in us acts of redeeming love; come down to feed and nourish and delight our souls by imparting to us His own life. "For the bread of God is He that cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world."

"Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread." The *real* asking of anything from the Lord is the heart's desire for the thing asked. The Lord on his part is ever ready to give us the true bread from heaven. But we cannot receive it except upon certain conditions. There is something to be done on our part also. Bread for the soul can no more be procured without labor than bread for the body. Hence the Lord says: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you." We must resist and endeavor to overcome in ourselves the selfish dispositions and feelings which are contrary to the life of heaven, and labor to confirm the opposite. This requires of us much self-denial, many a hard internal conflict. And this is the labor—the spiritual labor—we have to perform before we can become conscious recipients of the bread of heaven, or before the hunger of the soul can be fully satisfied. Accordingly we read:—

"But Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

The Lord in His Divine Humanity is the Fountain of Life to angels and men, the source of all spiritual meat and drink. All that nourishes and sustains in us the life of heaven is from Him. Therefore He says: "I am the bread of life." "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Who but the Divine Being Himself could use language like this? But what is it to believe in Him, and to *come* to Him?

To believe in Him is to believe the truth revealed concerning Him—the truth which teaches what He has done, and is forever doing, to redeem and save mankind; and what we must do in order that His efforts to save us may not be in vain. And we must regard the truth which teaches this, not as something separate from the Lord, but as indissolubly connected with Him as the light is connected with the sun. We must think of it as the Lord Himself come down to us for the purpose of enlightening and guiding us in the way to heaven. For those who thus believe, the truth has life, and it gives them life; for in their minds it is not separated from its living source. Their souls are continually refreshed by cool draughts from the living Fountain. They have within them "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Therefore such believers never *thirst;* that is, they never lack refreshing and invigorating truth.

But what is meant by coming to the Lord so as never to hunger? To come to Him spiritually (and that is the only way that any one can really come to Him) is to come into a state of spiritual nearness or resemblance to Him; to become like Him in our dispositions and feelings, in our ends and aims; to love only what He loves, and to find our chief delight in doing what He loves to have us do. It is to be born again—created anew in His own image and likeness. And this can be accomplished only through religious obedience to the divine commandments. By shunning evils as sins, and thus overcoming in our hearts the inclinations which keep us spiritually far removed from the Lord—this is the only possible way of coming to Him so as to remain with Him. And all who come in this way experience an inward and heavenly rest which it is not possible to find in any other way. Therefore He says:

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

And all who come to the Lord in this manner find their souls perpetually fed and nourished by the good things of His love. They suffer no hunger, for His love, dwelling and operating in their hearts, imparts to them its own delights, and supplies them evermore with a feast of fat things. The selfish propensities, which keep them spiritually far removed from the Lord, being overcome, they eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Therefore He says: "He that cometh to me shall never hunger;" which means that his soul shall experience no unsatisfied want; it shall be abundantly supplied with the good and delightful things of the Divine love.

The Lord desires us all to come to Him spiritually; that is, to become like Him in the spirit and temper of our minds. He desires all to come and partake of the bread of heaven, which is Himself. And the end of all the gospel ordinances is to induce men to come, and to assist them on the way.

And how beautifully does the Holy Supper symbolize what He is perpetually doing for all His humble followers! Feeding them with the bread of heaven; imparting to them His own love and wisdom, which are signified by the bread and wine.

And all who are humbly striving, with the Lord's help, to overcome in themselves the selfish dispositions and feelings which keep them far from Him; all who have begun, through the practice of self-denial and the keeping of the commandments, to learn something of the meaning and nature of that bread which cometh down from heaven,—all such are disciples of the Lord, and are invited by Him to come and partake of this sacrament. And they will be benefited by coming. Not that this ordinance is essential to any one's salvation—for it is not; but if we engage in it from a desire thus to express our sense of dependence on the Lord for everything good and true, coupled with a desire to become more fully united to Him who said, "This do in remembrance of me," it cannot fail to profit us. It is, we are told, the most holy act of formal worship, and as such tends to bring us into closer communion with Him, and to keep us in remembrance of Him, and of all that He has done and is perpetually doing for the salvation of men;—yes, and in remembrance of what we must do in order to be saved.

V.

THE ARM OF THE LORD.

His strength is in the clouds.—PSALMS LXVIII, 34.

In the Holy Scripture we find frequent mention of *clouds* in connection with the Author of revelation. God is represented as encompassed with clouds, as dwelling in the clouds, as making the clouds His chariot; His faithfulness and truth are said to reach unto the clouds, and the second coming of the Son of Man is said to be upon the clouds; and in the text it is said, "His strength is in the clouds." How plain is it from all this to be seen that *clouds*, as used in the Scripture, is a symbolic term, and not to be literally interpreted. What is the meaning of this symbol? By knowing this, we may understand why it is said that God's strength is in the clouds.

We learn from the revelations made for the New Church that *clouds* denote divine truth in *ultimates*, or truth in the literal sense of the Word. In this sense the Word is said to be "in its fulness, its sanctity, and its power." We are told also that all power resides in ultimates, and that the Lord operates all effects from first principles by means of ultimates. This may be better understood by reflecting upon how the case is with man, who was created to be an image and likeness of the Lord.

Man's *first principles* are the things belonging to his mind or spirit. They are the affections of his will and the thoughts of his understanding. His *ultimates* are the things of his body, especially the hands and feet, or the coarser and stronger parts of the body, such as the bony and cartilaginous substances. The ultimates of nature, or of the created universe, are all stony, saline, oily, mineral, and metallic substances, which enter into and form earthy, vegetable, and animal matter.

Now, we all know that it is by means of the bony and cartilaginous substances of the body, together with the substances of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, that man produces everything which is produced by human labor. Without feet and hands (the ultimates of man), and without wood, stone, iron, copper, lead, etc. (the ultimates of things spiritual), what could man do in this lower sphere? He might possess wisdom superior to that of the highest angels, yet he could accomplish nothing without the instrumentality of these ultimates. He could not till the soil, nor rear cities, nor construct railroads, nor build ships, nor navigate the ocean, nor perform any work in this lowest or ultimate realm of creation.

We see, then, that, so far as man is concerned, all things that he creates, and all effects that he produces, he creates and produces from first principles by means of ultimates. He could accomplish nothing without ultimates. And the same may be said of man in the spiritual world; for there are ultimates in that world as well as in this. There, as here, men have bodies with feet and hands; and there are trees, earths, stones, minerals, and various things for the hands to handle, but all spiritual and substantial, not material.

Now, if man produces all effects from first principles by means of ultimates, we might rationally conclude that God does so likewise. And this also is true; and in this truth are involved others of great practical moment.

The ultimates of the written Word (signified by the clouds) are the truths of the literal sense. The literal sense is the foundation and containant of the spiritual. Without the former, the latter would have nothing to rest upon. All power, too, resides in the literal sense, as the power of a finite mind resides in, or is exerted by, the ultimates of the body. It is by means of the literal sense that the Lord reaches man in his low, natural state, and exerts for him His regenerating power, as it is by means of the ultimates of nature that He produces all effects in the natural world.

The lower, or external, always precedes the higher, or internal, in the order of time. Chronologically speaking, the means are always before the end. The tree, with its branches and leaves, is always before the flower and fruit. Natural life precedes spiritual life. Before man can exist in the interior or spiritual world, he must first exist in the exterior or natural world. So before we can receive the goods and truths of the spiritual sense of the Word, we must first receive the goods and truths of the natural sense. Our inner life can never be formed according to the interior truths of the Word, until our outer life has been formed according to its exterior truths. That is, we can never learn to love and keep the Lord's precepts according to their higher or spiritual sense, until we have first learned to love and keep them according to their lower or literal sense. We have no power to obey the commandments —thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet, etc.,—in their spiritual sense, until we have first learned to regard and shun as a sin against God the things forbidden by the literal sense of these precepts. A house must have a foundation on which to rest or it cannot stand. Neither can the heavens—the heavens within us—stand without the earth. And the only suitable foundation in the soul for the things of heaven to rest upon are the precious stones, whereon the New Jerusalem is to be built; and these are the truths of the literal sense of the Word. When these stones have been firmly laid in our minds, that is, when these ultimate truths have become part of our life, then the Holy City has a secure foundation within us. The angels of heaven have something solid and enduring to stand upon in their benevolent efforts to lift us up. The Lord is then able to operate upon the interiors of our minds as He could not before. By means of the new earth, He is able to create a new heaven within us. Through the instrumentality of these lower or ultimate truths, He is able to exert His regenerating and saving power upon our hearts as He could not without such instrumentality; for it is a law of the divine operation that all effects are produced from first principles by means of ultimates.

This truth is one whose practical importance can hardly be overestimated. And it is one which I would urge with the more earnestness, because, if I mistake not, there is among the receivers of the New Christianity a tendency to overlook the importance of ultimates in the work of regeneration. There is a tendency in some minds to undervalue the importance of the literal sense of the Word—the importance of teaching this sense to our children and teaching them to obey it. It is natural, perhaps, that there should be this tendency. So much is said about the spiritual sense in the Writings of the New Church, it is not strange that some should overlook the importance of the literal sense and come to set a light value upon it. Yet there is nothing in the Writings to warrant such oversight or to justify any disparagement of the literal sense. On the contrary, we are perpetually reminded of the importance of this sense, not on its own account, but on account of the higher senses which it is the divine medium of conveying to our minds. We are assured that the literal sense of the Word is the basis, containant, and support of the more interior senses; that the Word in its literal sense is in its fulness, its sanctity, and its power; that all doctrine is to be drawn from and confirmed by the literal sense; that the Word without the literal sense would be like a palace in the air, or like a temple without roof and walls, or like the tabernacle without the curtains and veils, or like the human body without skin to cover or bones to support it, or like the heart and lungs without the *pleura*, or the brain without the *dura* and *pia mater* and their common covering, the skull. The literal sense of the Word is, indeed, the arm of the Lord. Through this as a medium He puts forth His saving strength, as man puts forth his strength through the instrumentality of his arm. All deep and strong religious convictions, you will find, are grounded in the literal sense of the Word. All force of religious purpose, all abiding religious faith, all strong religious character, will be found to have the same sure foundation. Verily, "God's strength is in the clouds."

God's strength in man is the strength of heaven—the strength of all those high and holy principles in the heart which constitute the greatness and glory of our humanity; the strength of kindness and generosity, of forbearance and mercy, of patience and hope, of faith and justice and disinterested love. In our unregenerate state these heavenly principles are very weak within us. Indeed, they may be said not to exist at all, but the opposite principles. How, then, are the principles of heaven to become strong within us? Or how are we to become strong in all noble and manly and womanly traits, in all generous and humane feelings, in kindness, mercy, justice, and love? For if strong in these, we are strong with the strength that the Lord imparts; a measure of God's own strength is in us. How shall this heavenly strength be acquired?

First, there must be awakened within you some *desire* for heavenly strength, some desire for newness of life. For without such desire, you will never think of taking the steps necessary to its attainment. Without a *desire* for wisdom, you can never become wise. Without a desire for knowledge, you can never become learned. Without a desire for skill in some art or profession, you can never hope to become skilful in that art or profession. And so, without a desire for the life and strength of heaven, you can never hope to receive them. If you have this desire, cherish it that it may become deep and strong and abiding. If you have it not, pray that it may be given you and neglect no means nor opportunity of awakening it.

But important and essential as is the desire for God's life and strength within, this alone is not sufficient. Before we can *have* that life, before we can *feel* His strength, the desire must flow forth into ultimates. It must express itself in some appropriate form of outward action. As it is through the exercise of the body that the body grows strong in physical strength, so it is through the exercise of the soul in heavenly ways that the soul acquires heavenly strength. We become self-denying by practising self-denial; charitable, by doing deeds of charity; patient, by exercising patience; gentle, by pursuing gentle ways; righteous, by doing deeds of righteousness; just, by obeying the laws of justice; forbearing, by the exercise of forbearance; kind, by doing acts of kindness. There is no other way in which heavenly dispositions can become strengthened within us, save through the performance of heavenly deeds. There is no other way in which the Lord's own life, the life of disinterested love, can be communicated to us in its richness and strength, but through our voluntary obedience to the laws of that life. Therefore it is written: "Blessed are they that *do* His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." "He shall render to every man according to his *works.*" "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." "And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their *works.*"

Why is it that so much is said in the Bible about the importance of *doing* the truth, or *keeping* the commandments? And why is it that men are to be rewarded according to their *works?* Is it that the Lord will deal out a certain amount of happiness or misery in the other life as a just compensation for the good or evil deeds that men have done in this world, as the overseer in a factory or machine shop pays his laborers at the end of the week according to the amount of work each one has performed? Such, indeed, is the apparent truth in the literal sense of the Word. But it is not the real truth. The Lord never acts in this arbitrary way. The real truth is that our outward acts serve to develop and form inward character. One class of actions, those that are in accordance with the revealed laws of the heavenly life, tend to develop heavenly character, to strengthen heavenly dispositions and feelings. Another class, those done in opposition to the laws of the heavenly life and in obedience to the promptings of self-love, tend to strengthen feelings and dispositions of an opposite character. One class of actions tends to develop and strengthen heavenly love in the soul; and in the exercise of this love is heavenly bliss. Another class tends to strengthen the love of self, which is the very fire of hell, and in whose exercise there is no true joy. One class of deeds attunes the soul to sweet and heavenly harmony; another class throws it out of tune, producing infernal discords. It is in this way, through the operation of an unchangeable law, that the Lord "will render to every man according to his works." Therefore it becomes every man to consider whether the works he is doing from day to day, or the disposition and purpose that he carries into his works, have a tendency to form within him the life of heaven or the life of hell.

But how, it will be asked, can heavenly deeds be performed before we have the life of heaven? How can we exercise the graces of gentleness, patience, forbearance, charity, and self-denial, or perform works corresponding to them and indicative of their presence in the soul, before we possess these graces? An important question, but one not difficult to answer.

We must begin low down—on the very outside—with acts of *self-compulsion.* We must begin by forcing ourselves to do the deeds which correspond to the graces that we seek. We must compel ourselves to acts of self-denial, when self-denial is painful to us and there is none of it in our hearts. We must compel ourselves to do deeds of kindness, when we feel no kindness within. We must compel ourselves to act patiently when we feel impatient; to do justly when we *feel* like doing otherwise; to act in a gentle and forbearing way when hard and angry feelings are aroused. And this not with hypocritical intent, not for the purpose of concealing feelings which we and others know to be wrong, but with the view of suppressing those feelings and encouraging the growth of the opposite.

In all moral improvement our first steps are steps in self-compulsion. We do, through self-constraint, that which, if the right feeling existed, we would do from affection and with delight. But our act, self-constrained though it be, helps to beget and strengthen in us the feeling that we ought to have and desire to have. You are irregular and disorderly, it may be, in your whole outward life. You are careless and negligent and slipshod in all your habits. You rise late in the morning, and are out late at night, and are always late at your meals and late at work. You never fulfil an engagement nor meet an appointment punctually. You are disorderly in your family, in your shop, in your business, and even in your personal attire. Now, this outward disorder all springs from disorder within. And how shall the inward disorder be cured and a delight in order be made to take its place? Where will you begin, suppose you recognize the wrong of your present disorder and desire to correct it? *Right where the inward disorder reveals itself on the lowest plane.* Begin by compelling yourself to change your disorderly habits, to shun them as things contrary to the Divine will.

Or perhaps you are lacking in Christian kindness and benevolence. There lies a poor, sick, bed-ridden woman in the street next you, and you feel no sympathy for her, no interest in her. Your heart is unmoved by the story of her sufferings. It is cold as an iceberg and hard as the nether mill-stone. How may it become warm, soft, tender, and sympathetic, and a feeling of benevolence be kindled within you? *Compel yourself to visit and do for that poor, unfortunate one.*

Or maybe you are lacking in Christian patriotism. You are indifferent to the welfare of your country. You care not whether your country makes for herself a record of honor or a record of shame, whether she rises to glory or sinks to perdition, shines forth a light among the nations or fades and goes out in ignoble eclipse. A deplorable state, indeed! and perhaps you know it, and wish that you felt differently. Well, go, *do* for your country through self-compulsion the things which true patriots do from love. Give time, money, merchandise, labor; use tongue or pen or sword or musket in her behalf; go, sacrifice and suffer in some way for your country, and see if love of country is not then awakened within you.

And so it is always. God comes to us with renewing grace and strength in and through those ultimate acts of life which we perform from a right motive, or with a view to His service and the purification of our own souls. Acts of benevolence beget and strengthen the feeling of benevolence. Deeds of patriotism beget the spirit of patriotism. Works of charity beget and increase within us the spirit of charity. Acts and words and looks of kindness foster the spirit of kindness. Deeds of noble self-denial beget a self-denying spirit. And all heavenly dispositions and feelings are born of and strengthened by corresponding outward acts. Without the outward heavenly act there can be no growth of inward heavenly strength. Heaven comes to us—yea, the Lord Himself comes to us—with saving strength in and through the medium of these ultimate acts. “His strength is in the clouds.”

VI.

CHRIST'S TEMPTATION AND ITS LESSON.

Again the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.—MATT. IV, 8, 9, 10.

The sublimest of all facts in human or divine history—the fact which eclipses all others in its grandeur and glory and comprehensiveness—is the assumption and glorification of our frail nature by the Divine Being Himself. To think of the infinite and perfect God, who inhabiteth eternity, coming down to our low estate, investing Himself with our finite humanity together with all its evil inclinations and perverse tendencies, subjecting Himself to our human conditions and relations, experiencing our human weaknesses, wants, woes, and temptations, suffering all that our human nature can suffer from the injustice and cruelty of wicked men and the craft and malignity of evil spirits, and all this that He might enlighten, quicken, and save us; might impart unto us the healing influences of His spirit and draw us into blissful communion with Himself. This is the sublimest fact in the world's history. Can the human imagination conceive of a spectacle more grand or affecting? The perfect and infinitely just One suffering the keenest agonies for the unjust,—not in their stead, not in a vicarious way, as has been believed and taught, but as a devoted and loving mother suffers for an erring child whom she longs to bless, or as the true patriot suffers and bleeds for the country that he loves and longs to save.

How encouraging and comforting the thought that in our states of deepest gloom, bitterest sorrow, and sorest temptation, the Divine Saviour has Himself experienced similar states, and is therefore able to sympathize with and succor us. As saith the Apostle: "For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."

"Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptation means,
For He has felt the same."

So that it is not merely by word that the Lord in His Divine Humanity is now able to instruct us. He teaches us in that more efficient way—by His example; for He has lived, down on this lowest plane of human existence, all the heavenly truths He taught, has obeyed all the laws of the inner life contained in His Holy Word. So that His glorification is the grand prototype of our regeneration. In becoming renewed after His divine likeness, we have to pass through states similar to those that He passed through in glorifying the Humanity. We have to be led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. We have to suffer scorn, hatred, and persecution for the kingdom of heaven's sake, as He did, from evil spirits, if not from evil men. We must have our hours of agony and bloody sweat, moments of darkness and spiritual desolation, when our souls cry out in the bitterness of despair, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" And so we must follow the Lord in the regeneration, else we cannot receive the crown of life which He has promised. We must suffer with Him before we can hope to reign with Him. As He says: "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."

But when we speak of Christ merely as a teacher—though He teaches by example as well as by precept—we utter not half the truth, and not the most important part of it either. He does what is infinitely more and better than any teaching—He sends renewing grace and strength from His glorified Humanity. He stretches out a powerful hand, that we, in our weak and fallen state, can take hold of. He places underneath us His almighty arms, and tenderly lifts us up. He exerts a redeeming and saving power over the souls of all who look to Him in humble trust. He sends the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, a new dynamic force, a spiritually renewing grace, to drive from the hearts of His sincere followers the malignant influences of hell, or to give them new power to resist these influences. It is as if a teacher should impart to the minds of his pupils, along with the instruction he communicates, new powers of perception and thought and memory, and new strength of will to obey the instruction given.

Jesus, we are told, was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And all His followers have to be led in the same way, and for the same purpose. A wilderness, as being a wild, uncultivated, unfruitful place, overgrown with briars and thorns, and infested by destructive wild beasts, is a fit symbol of the state of the unregenerate human heart, a state in which the natural inclinations, which are supremely selfish and worldly, grow with wild luxuriance; a state in which truth is not yet conjoined with good, where the flowers, fruits, and fragrances of heaven are as yet unknown, where selfishness with its train of unhallowed lusts holds sovereign sway. This state is described in the symbolic language of Scripture as a wilderness, a desert, parched ground, "a habitation of dragons and a court for owls;" a place possessed by the cormorant and the bittern; where nettles and brambles grow; where the wild beasts of the desert meet with the wild beasts of the island; where the great owl makes her nest and lays and hatches and gathers under her shadow; where the vultures also are gathered, every one with her mate (Isaiah xxxiv).

The opposite of this state, that is, the regenerate or heavenly state, is represented in Scripture as a cultivated and beautiful garden. Thus man, in his state of primeval innocence, while the hand of his Maker was still fresh upon him, is represented as being placed in the Garden of Eden, where "the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food." The Garden of Eden denotes that state of celestial intelligence into which every one is brought by regeneration. Now, therefore, as in primeval days, the Lord places every man whom He creates a living soul in the Garden of Eden.

It was after Jesus had been baptized, after the heavens had been opened to Him and the Spirit of God had descended upon Him, that He was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And so it is not until we have received the baptism of the Spirit, not until the divine Spirit of truth has descended upon us through the opening heavens—the heavens of our minds—that we are led up into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. For it is not until then that we are able to see in what a deplorable state we are by inheritance. It is not until then that we are able to see and acknowledge that we are in the wilderness of sin. It is the divine Spirit of truth descending from out the opening heavens that gives us this perception and acknowledgment. And as this is a step, a very important step, upward toward heaven, therefore it is said that Jesus was led *up* of the Spirit into the wilderness.

And as no one can be tempted of the devil until he is led of the Spirit into a state to see and acknowledge his evils, and to desire to be rid of them, therefore it is said that Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Spiritual temptations are inward struggles between the falses and evils of the natural man and the goods and truths of heaven, or between good and evil spirits. They are as necessary to our regeneration as storms and tempests in the natural world are to the pure and healthy state of the atmosphere. We should not know what terrible evils there are within us if they were never excited; and it is the appropriate work of evil spirits to excite them. Without knowing what our evils are we cannot fight against them; we cannot be humbled in view of them; we cannot really acknowledge them, and, of course, cannot look to the Lord nor implore His divine help to overcome them. We cannot wage war against the hell in our hearts until we have been led of the Spirit to see and acknowledge that hell is indeed there. The Lord could not have glorified His Humanity without temptations admitted into it from all the hells—*i. e.*, without having all the evils in His assumed Humanity so excited or called into active exercise, that He could become conscious, through His own personal experience, of their dreadful malignity. Neither can we become regenerated without a similar experience.

The journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness to the land of Canaan represents the spiritual journey of all regenerating men, all who are traveling toward the heavenly Canaan. And the things which the Israelites suffered in the wilderness represent the things which God's spiritual Israel have to suffer in the course of their regeneration. To every regenerate soul the Lord is now saying, as He said to the Israelites of old: "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping His commandments; who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee and prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end." This is the great and beneficent purpose of all suffering, internal and external; it is to humble us, and prove us, and do us good at our latter end.

Three particular temptations of Christ are mentioned in the chapter from which our text is taken; and by these three are denoted all the temptations that He endured while glorifying the humanity, and all that we have to endure in becoming regenerated.

The devil is represented in the text as taking Jesus up into an exceeding high mountain, and showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. It is plain that these words are not to be understood literally; for all the kingdoms of this world could not possibly be seen in a natural way from the top of any mountain. Like all the words of Holy Scripture, they are to be understood spiritually.

The exceeding high mountain to which the devil took Jesus is the same kind of mountain as that to which he often takes those who endeavor to follow Him in the regeneration. There are two kinds of spiritual elevation which are the exact opposites one of the other. One is real, the other is fantastic. One is heavenly, the other is infernal. One is that true elevation of soul which a genuine, disinterested love—love to the Lord and the neighbor—imparts; the other is that false and imaginary elevation which the love of self and the world produces. The one, therefore, is an elevation caused by an influx of genuine love to the Lord and the neighbor, the other is caused by an influx of the evil loves of hell. The difference is as between a state of divine exaltation, which is one of genuine humility, and of self-exaltation, which is one of unbounded pride.

A mountain, therefore, being a natural elevation, has these two opposite significations, according to the connection in which the word occurs. In the present instance it denotes that false or imaginary elevation which an inordinate self-love produces, because it is the mountain into which the devil takes us. The lowly vale of humility, that state in which we claim no merit to ourselves, in which we feel our own vileness to be so great that we cannot lift up so much as our eyes unto heaven, but smite upon our breasts, inwardly exclaiming, in the language of the poor publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner"—this is the true mount of God, for this is true spiritual elevation. Into this mount the devil never takes us. It is his vocation, on the contrary, to inflame to the utmost our love of self —to infuse into us his own spirit of pride, self-conceit, lust of dominion, and contempt of others in comparison with ourselves; in short, to make us feel highly exalted in our own estimation. This is the "exceeding high mountain" into which the devil takes us. And when in this state of self-exaltation (which is a state of mere fantasy, false, unreal, not a state of true spiritual elevation) the devil then presents to us other fantasies, which he makes us see as realities. He arrays before our mental vision in most seductive form the gaud and glitter of this world—its wealth, its pleasures, its honors, its preferments—and at the same time excites in our hearts an inordinate love of these things. He invests them with false but most alluring charms. He makes us feel that these are the things to make us happy, the things, therefore, to be particularly desired and sought after. And thus it is that, when he has taken us into that exceeding high mountain of pride of self-regard and self-exaltation, he then shows us, as he did our great Prototype, "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them."

"And saith unto Him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." The consummate liar! He had none of these things to give, and he knew it. But this is the way he always does. He is always making magnificent promises; always holding out glittering baits wherewith to delude and ensnare; always investing the baubles of this world with a grandeur and a glory that does not really belong to them; always exalting the things of time and sense above the things of eternity, and seeking to inflame and intensify our love of the former and deaden our interest in the latter. And all this that he may gain complete dominion over us, and subject whatever there be of Christ and His kingdom within us to his own sovereign sway.

Yes, now, as in primeval days, that old serpent (which is the devil) is always whispering his specious lies in the ears of his meditated victims: "Ye shall not surely die;" "Your eyes shall be opened;" "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," if ye will only hearken to me. And through his subtle arts of persuasion, or still more subtle power of fantasy, he always makes the tempting baits he offers seem "pleasant to the eyes," and "good for food," and "things to be desired to make one wise." But his purpose always is to drive us from the garden of God, or to shut the gates of Eden against us, to gain absolute dominion over our souls.

And when, in our ordinary private walks, in the intercourse of business, in the discharge of our daily duties, the things of this world—houses, lands, money, equipage, honors, or preferments—are arrayed before our imagination as things of transcendent worth, things to be prized and sought after more than truth, honor, justice, sincerity, love, a noble Christian manhood; and when we are busily planning how we may secure the former, and willing, for the sake of them, to sacrifice these latter,—then we may know that the devil is exhibiting before our bedazzled eyes "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," and is saying to us, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." And he is not the less surely doing and saying this, because he does not appear to us in a visible form, nor make himself heard by an audible voice. The thought even of securing some worldly object, some glittering bauble held up before us, at the sacrifice of truth, honor, justice, or integrity, comes not from heaven, but from hell. It is the whisper of the serpent, falling clear and distinct on our inward ear. And if our inner eye could be suddenly opened, we should see infernal spirits standing at our elbow, and striving, by their subtle arts of persuasion, to gain the mastery of our souls. Alas! "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

And if we find ourselves listening favorably to the suggestions of the devil; if we discover in ourselves an inclination to violate some Christian principle, some law of heavenly life, for the sake of obtaining the desired object; if we begin to reason with ourselves in this wise: "Oh! the world will never know it, if you do commit this little wrong. Why, then, do you hesitate? What are you afraid of? Isn't it a thing easy to be kept secret?"—if we find ourselves thinking and reasoning thus, we may know that we are just about yielding ourselves willing servants of the devil; that we are on the point of offering our devotions to him, as really and truly as though we fell down before him in an attitude of worship. For we really worship him whose behests we obey, whose will we do. "Know ye not," saith the Apostle, "that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

And in such hour of temptation it is not wise, it is not safe, to parley with the Tempter. It is not wise or safe to calculate the chances of the wrong we are about to commit becoming known to the world. It is enough to know that no wrong ever was, or ever can be, done in secret; it is seen of God, it is seen of angels; and there is nothing covered in human hearts which shall not one day be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known; and that the things here said and done in darkness shall then and there be heard in the light; and the things we have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops. It is not safe at such an hour to begin to balance the fleeting shows of earth against the enduring realities of heaven, or to calculate how little of Christian principle we may barter for a given amount of pelf. The highest, yea, the *only*, true wisdom and safety lie in promptly turning our backs on the Tempter and our faces toward the Lord Jesus Christ; and then, if we will reverently listen, we shall hear whatever there is of Jesus in our hearts, saying unto him, " Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." And we serve and truly worship Him only by shunning all evil dispositions and practices as sins against Him, or by learning, believing, and humbly striving to do His precepts.

It is thus that the Lord ever speaks in the hearts of all His weak and tempted children, the moment they perceive and acknowledge that they are tempted of the devil and humbly seek His saving help. And His word, when adopted as our own, is omnipotent over the hell within us. It takes from worldly things their glory, and from the Tempter all his power. It quells in our hearts the lusts of evil, and renders the graces of heaven—humility, honor, justice, love—alone attractive. Then the devil leaves us, and, behold, angels come and minister unto us.

VII.

REALITY OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD.

Then the devil leaveth Him, and behold angels came and ministered unto Him.—MATT. IV, 11.

Few facts have been more observable, and none more remarkable, than the almost universal scepticism among modern Christians (particularly the more intelligent and better educated classes) touching the existence and reality of good and evil spirits—angels and devils. True, you will often hear spiritual beings casually referred to in pious discourse. Teaching ministers as well as popular poets often speak of angels and devils; but then it is more in the way of rhetorical embellishment, than in the manner of men who have a deep and well-grounded conviction of the reality of such beings.

Ask the first twenty intelligent members whom you shall meet of any Christian congregation what is their belief on this subject. Ask them if they believe in the existence of angels and devils as real, living, conscious, intelligent, active beings, dwelling in a world not far removed from this that we call ours, and exerting a positive influence upon the people of this world. Ask twenty, I say, of your Christian neighbors some such questions as these in a sober way, and I should be disappointed if their answers did not reveal a pretty wide-spread scepticism, even among professing Christians, in regard to the very existence of spiritual beings or a spiritual world.

I have said that this scepticism among intelligent Christians in regard to the existence of spirits, good and evil, is as remarkable as it is observable. For the very Book which Christians profess to receive as a revelation from God, the Book which they regard as true and holy and worthy of all acceptation, is full of the clearest intimations and most explicit teachings on this subject. On almost every page of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation the existence of a realm above Nature, of a spiritual world inhabited by good and evil spirits, is clearly implied if not distinctly asserted. Angels and devils are spoken of with the same freedom and familiarity as objects whose reality was never called in question. Their existence is everywhere assumed. There is never the slightest attempt to prove it, any more than there is to prove the existence of man, or the earth on which he dwells. They are often spoken of as being seen of men, as conversing with them, as sustaining an intimate relation to them, as feeling and manifesting an interest in human affairs, and exerting an influence upon them.

Thus angels were seen of Jacob as he was returning from Padan-Aram, from his profitable servitude with Laban; and when he saw them he exclaimed, "This is God's host" (Gen. xxxii, 2). An angel appeared unto Gideon, ordering him to assume the command of Israel (Judges vi, 11). An angel appeared to the wife of Manoah, and afterward to Manoah himself, announcing to them the birth of Samson, and foretelling the deliverance of Israel out of the hand of the Philistines through his instrumentality (Judges xiii). An angel appeared to Elijah in the wilderness when fleeing from the wrath of Jezebel, and awoke him by touching him (1 Kings xix, 5). An angel appeared to Zacharias, and foretold the birth of John the Baptist; another appeared unto Mary, and foretold to her the birth of Christ; and in both instances their predictions were fulfilled. The shepherds of Bethlehem saw an angel, who announced unto them "good tidings of great joy," saying: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord." And not one angel only, but a multitude of the heavenly host were seen by the same shepherds, and were heard "praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Angels were also seen by the women at the sepulcher, and announced to them that the Lord had risen. And myriads of them were beheld, and their glad voices heard, by the Seer of Patmos when he was in the spirit; and he tells us what was the song they sang. Again, in Luke xv, 10, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. So full and emphatic is the Scripture testimony to the existence of good spirits or angels, their presence with men, and their interest in human affairs.

Nor is the Bible less explicit in its teaching in regard to evil spirits or devils, and their influence in this our world. Multitudes, while our Lord was upon the earth, were possessed with devils; and we are told that He cast out the devils with His Word. He also gave His disciples power over unclean spirits to cast them out. When He sent them forth to preach the gospel of the kingdom, He gave them a commission to "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, *cast out devils*." Unclean spirits, when they saw Him, cried out from fear, and fell down before Him. And "with authority," it is said, "commandeth He the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." And on one occasion, when He was met by a poor demoniac, who had his dwelling among the tombs, "He said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit." And when he was asked, "What is thy name? He answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many." And immediately after, this same evil spirit is spoken of in the plural as "the unclean spirits" and "all the devils."

And accordingly we find that "all the devils," or all evil spirits in the aggregate, are generally designated in the Bible by a singular noun—the devil.

By the devil, then, is denoted all evil spirits in one complex; for they all think and feel and act together as one huge monster. They all actually form one organic whole, and are all animated by one and the same devilish purpose; and that purpose is, to prevent the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom here on earth, or the reign of truth, justice, liberty, and love in human hearts; and to perpetuate their own dominion here, or the reign of falsehood, injustice, hatred, and strife. For see what the devil's character is, as portrayed in Holy Writ. It is clearly enough indicated in the very names applied to him. For he is called a liar, a destroyer, the accuser of the brethren, the angel of the bottomless pit, the adversary, the deceiver, a murderer, the great dragon, the old serpent, the tempter, the wicked one, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. He is represented as the enemy of God and of the human race; as earnestly laboring for man's destruction; as the inspirer of wicked thoughts and purposes, putting it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray the blessed Saviour; as corrupting and misleading men through craft and subtlety; as going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

Such is the clear Scripture testimony in regard to the denizens of the spiritual world, their proximity to the inhabitants of this world, their interest in and their influence upon our human affairs. If the existence of an invisible and innumerable company of angels and devils, their close proximity to man, and their intense desire and earnest efforts, the one to do him good and the other to do him harm, be not plainly taught in the Bible, then what, I would ask, *is* plainly taught there? Yet, strange to say, the plain Scripture teaching on this most interesting and important subject has come to be almost entirely overlooked or ignored by many intelligent Christians, and by others so explained as to cast doubt on the very existence of good or evil spirits.

According to the revelations made for the New Church, then, there is a spiritual world, wherein all things are spiritual and substantial, and therefore as much more real than the things of this world as mind is more real than matter. It is not remote from this world as to space, but is within it as the soul is within the body.

The spiritual world is peopled, too, by a countless multitude of beings in the human form who were all once inhabitants of the natural world. These beings are organized or arranged in general into two great classes, a heaven of angels and a hell of devils. The angels are distributed into innumerable societies, corresponding, in their order and mutual relations and in the several functions they perform, to the different members and organs of the human body, so that together they constitute one man or angel of stupendous proportions; and before the Lord they actually appear as one man. They constitute His kingdom in the heavens. They are what is meant in the Bible by "the heavenly host," "the army of heaven," who are said to have followed Him that sat upon the white horse, and "the angel of the Lord," who, it is said, "encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them." Although there is an endless diversity of character among them, yet they are all good and wise, some in a higher and some in a lower degree, some being more imbued with one kind of good, and some with another. But love to the Lord and the neighbor is the inspiration, the very life-blood, of all their hearts. They are all images and likenesses of the Lord. They have learned of Him to be meek and lowly of heart; to be forgetful of themselves and thoughtful only of the good of others; to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God. For they are that great angelic throng, of whom it is said that they "came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They are those who, while on earth, learned to know and to do the will of the Lord, learned to deny self, take up the cross, and follow Him in the regeneration. They are all children of the Heavenly Father, having their Father's name written in their foreheads, having their hearts stamped indelibly with the impress of His spirit. Their love is like God's love—pure and unselfish. They love each other even better than they love themselves, and find their supreme delight in doing good and communicating wisdom and happiness to others, without a thought of recompense. They have in their hearts the spirit of the Lord, for they abide in Him and He in them. They love what He loves, and delight to do what He loves to have them do. Their ruling desire and purpose, their end and aim, is the same as His. It is to impart unto others the delights of heavenly life; to dissipate the moral darkness, and heal the moral sickness, and renew the moral strength of the world; to enlighten and purify and save and bless (A. C. 454, 497).

Such and so noble is true humanity. Such the quality of that angelic life which we are all made capable of attaining, which the Lord in infinite mercy is ever seeking, through varied discipline, to develop or build up within us. Such the character of that kingdom in the heavens whereof the Bible so often speaks, a kingdom of truth, righteousness, joy, and peace—yea, a kingdom of pure, just, and loving hearts—the very kingdom for which we pray when we breathe that inspired prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven so also upon the earth."

And the Scripture tells us what sort of people they are who become subjects of this kingdom, who enter it when they enter the other world. They are those just and undefiled ones who walk in the law of the Lord; those lowly ones who through repentance and regeneration become as little children; the meek, the merciful, the poor in spirit, the pure in heart, the persecuted for right's sake, those that do the will of the Father which is in the heavens. But "there shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie."

But there is another kingdom of which the Bible tells us—a hell of devils—in the invisible world which is altogether opposite to that of which I have just spoken. The devils, too, according to the revelations made for the New Church, are arranged into innumerable societies in like manner as the angels, differing from each other according to the kind and degree of evil in which they are immersed. And these societies of devils, like those of the angels, are all united, so that, together, they constitute one great and inhuman monster, called in Scripture "the devil." The character of these evil spirits or devils is in all respect the opposite of that of the angels. They have no love of the Lord or the neighbor, and find no delight, therefore, in the performance of kind and neighborly acts. They have no pleasure in anything that is good and true, no delight in the exercise of neighborly love. The supreme and ruling love of them all is the love of self; and this is real hatred toward all who refuse to minister to this love. And as self-love, when it reigns supreme, is the source of all other evil loves, therefore the devils are immersed in every kind of evil and consequent falsity. They are full of hatred, malice, deceit, and uncharitableness; full of pride, hypocrisy, craft, and subtlety; full of falsehood, treachery, cunning, and cruelty. Their life is a life of evil, for it is a life of unmingled selfishness. They are forever seeking to do their own will, and their will is always contrary to the will of the Lord. Their delight is to do mischief, to foment strifes and divisions, to excite rebellion against rightful authority, to stir up envies, jealousies, hatreds, and revenges, to intensify all the worst and bitterest feelings of the unregenerate human heart, to blind, and mislead, and if possible make slaves of all who come within the sphere of their influence. (Read A. C. 693, '95.)

Such is the nature, character, and life of that legion of evil spirits in the unseen world which the Scripture calls the devil. What a contrast to the life and character of those happy and shining ones in the realms above!

And bear in mind that, as to our spirits which are invested with flesh and blood for a brief hour, we now are all living in the spiritual world. We are actually associated with one or the other class of spirits that I have just described. We may, if we choose, flee the society of men, but we cannot be alone. We cannot rid ourselves of the society of spirits. An invisible company attends us wherever we go, in solitude not less than in society. We do not see them, nor sensibly perceive their influence; yet their presence is none the less a reality, nor their influence less positive. We do not hear their voices; yet they converse with us during all our waking hours. Through the intricate and mysterious galleries of the soul they whisper to us a sweet gospel of peace and good will,—thoughts of truth, justice, mercy, kindness, and willing self-sacrifice for the good of others; or they suggest ways and means whereby our pride, or vanity, or ambition, or love of ease, or selfish greed of gain, or lust of dominion may be most surely gratified;—one or the other of these, according as our invisible associates chance to be from the realms above or the regions below; or according as we are more willing to listen to the soft pleadings of the angels, or to be beguiled by the subtle suggestions of the devil. One or the other of these two classes of spirits are our intimate associates, our bosom companions. Of one or the other we take counsel from day to day; to one or the other we listen from hour to hour; with one or the other we think and feel and act in the ordinary intercourse of our daily life. There is no escape from this. Our moral nature and the arrangements and constitution of the moral universe render it a necessity. Our spirits must breathe the atmosphere of either heaven or hell.

But the liberty of choice is mercifully granted to each one of us. We may each of us choose our invisible associates as freely as we do our visible ones. Nay, we do choose them, whether we know it or not. We have actually chosen them, though it may not be for eternity; for we have the power and the liberty to change our spiritual as well as our worldly associates.

How, then, may we know the character of our invisible associates? How may we know whether our spirits keep company with angels, and inhale from day to day the pure and balmy air of heaven, or whether we walk with unclean spirits and breathe the foul exhalations of hell? This is a solemn question, and one which the teachings of the New Church enables us to answer definitely and with confidence.

There is a great and universal law governing all associations in the other world, as well those in the hells as those in the heavens. And that is the law of spiritual affinity, the law that forever determines like ones to their like. Through the operation of this law kindred spirits are drawn together in the other world and held together in the same society. Those who are in a similar kind and degree of good, or a similar kind and degree of evil, have a mutual desire to associate. They are, therefore, drawn together by the force of spiritual attraction, a law as constant and operative in the spiritual world as the attraction of gravity or of cohesion is in this world.

It is this same great law which determines the character of our invisible associates. By force of it we draw around us spirits who are similar to ourselves; similar, I mean, to what we are inwardly, as viewed by that all-searching Eye which scans the hidden motives of the heart. The prevailing character of our affections and thoughts, the love that rules and reigns in our hearts, the motives from which we uniformly act, the principles which ordinarily govern us in our intercourse with men,—these are the things which reveal the true character of our spiritual associates. If our prevailing desire and effort is to know and do the will of the Lord, if we regard and habitually shun as a sin whatever is contrary to His will, then angels are our companions; our spirits consort with the followers of the Lamb; we breathe the atmosphere of heaven. But if our ends are base and groveling, if we are heedless of God's commands and deaf to the dictates of duty or humanity, if our prevailing purpose is to do our own will rather than the will of the Heavenly Father, then may we know that our spiritual associates are from the dark realms beneath; we are in company with devils; we breathe the fetid air of hell.

We have only, therefore, to look at our ruling loves, at the prevailing dispositions, feelings, and motives of our hearts, at our governing end and aim in life, in order to ascertain the true character of our invisible companions. (Read A. C. 1680, 3796.)

A man's ruling end is his essential life, for he respects as an end what belongs to his life, or, what is the same, to his love. When the good of his neighbor, the general good, the good of the church and of the Lord's kingdom is the end regarded, then as to his soul he is in the Lord's kingdom; for the Lord's kingdom is nothing else but a kingdom of ends and uses respecting the good of the human race. The very angels attendant on man have their abode solely in his ends of life. So far as man has respect to an end of the same kind as influences the Lord's kingdom, the angels are delighted with him, and join themselves to him as a brother; but so far as he is influenced by selfish ends, the angels recede and evil spirits from hell draw near; for none but selfish ends have rule in hell." (A. C. 3796. See also 1680.)

And how are we to be withdrawn from the society of devils? for in our unregenerate state we are all of us supremely selfish, and intimately associated, therefore, with evil spirits. There is but one way, and that is by looking to the Lord Jesus Christ in humble and confiding faith, and shunning all known evils as sins against Him. He may, then, permit infernal spirits often to approach and assail us for our good. But whenever He permits them to come near us, and excite our evil dispositions and selfish feelings, and tempt us in a thousand ways to violate His righteous laws, at all such times, if we will look to Him in humble acknowledgment of our own weakness and of His almightiness, and from the heart say, "Get thee hence, Satan," He will give us the victory over the tempter. The devil will leave us, as he left Him, and angels will come and minister unto us. They will minister new hope, new light, new confidence, new strength to our needy souls. The devil may return again, and many times, to the onset. But we need not fear so long as our trust is in the Lord and our hearts respond with an uncompromising "Get thee hence" to every evil suggestion. The angels, too, will come again with their sweet ministry of love and peace. They will come, and keep coming, so long as we, through faith and stern resistance of the tempter, invite their visitations. And every time they come they will drop some fragrance from their robes, some new and healing influence on our hearts, and make it more and more manifest to our souls that they are indeed "God's host."

VIII.

THE CORE OF CHRISTIANITY.

If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.—MATT. XIX, 17.

How different is the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ from that of the great majority of His professed followers! How different the terms proclaimed by Him of admission into His kingdom in the heavens, from the terms of admission into His church on earth, as set forth in nearly all the creeds in Christendom! "If thou wilt enter into life," He says, "keep the commandments." Not a syllable about believing in a tripersonal God, a vicarious atonement, the resurrection of the body, baptismal regeneration, the eternity of hell torments, and many other things which the professed disciples of the Divine Master have incorporated into their creeds as things essential to be believed.

No. While our religious beliefs are by no means matters of indifference, while they help or hinder us on our way to heaven, while they tend to exalt or degrade, to beautify or mar the character, according as they are true or false, yet belief, according to the teaching of the Master, is not the most important thing. Belief alone, though it be a belief of the truth, is of no avail. It must be carried into practice; it must be wrought into a living conviction; it must beget in the soul a spirit like the Master's—the spirit of humility, love, justice, and self-consecration to the best welfare of the neighbor. This is the plain and indisputable teaching of the New Testament, as it is of the New Christian Church. Not faith alone, but faith united to charity; belief carried into practice; truth wrought into the life, the life of charity or disinterested love being the thing of supreme moment, the very essence of the kingdom of heaven.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," saith the Lord. On these two commandments, which require love to the Lord and the neighbor, hang all the law and the prophets. "If any man will come after me, *let him deny himself,* and take up his cross and follow me." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven." "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye *bear much fruit.*" "Ye are my friends if *ye do* whatsoever I command you." "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?" Jesus said, "Whosoever shall *do* the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister and mother." "They that *have done good* shall come forth unto the resurrection of life." "Blessed are the poor in spirit." "Blessed are the meek." "Blessed are the merciful." "Blessed are the pure in heart." "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, *according to their works.*" "I will give to every man according as his *work* shall be." "Blessed are they that *do* His commandments," etc. And Paul says: "Love is the fulfilling of the law." And "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Such passages as these—and the New Testament abounds in them—disclose the essential nature of the Christian religion. They teach that it consists in something more than mere belief, in something higher than doctrine. They show us that it is a divine spirit dwelling in the heart, sanctifying the affections, purifying the motives, sweetening the temper, refining the feelings, and pervading the whole life with its heavenly aroma. Yes; true religion as proclaimed in the gospel of our Lord, and in the teachings of the New Christianity, is a thing of the life rather than a creed; a peculiar quality of the heart rather than a form of doctrine. Wherever we see the spirit of kindness and disinterested love, the spirit of self-denial, the spirit of humility, meekness, gentleness, forbearance, uprightness, magnanimity, justice, resignation, trust, there we see something of the true church; for there we see something of the Master's own spirit. And all who have His spirit belong to His family and household. However they may differ in their doctrinal beliefs, they are all one at heart; their ends and aims are the same. They are one in Christ, and their intellectual differences need not, should not, prevent them from enjoying the fellowship of the spirit. Such is the teaching of the New Church whose dawn we are permitted to witness.

But far different is this from the teaching of the church of the past, of the church which is gradually being supplanted by the New. That church has made *belief* primary, *life* secondary. It has seated religion in the head rather than in the heart. It has, therefore, been more anxious to secure men's assent to certain dogmas than to secure their obedience to the divine commandments, or to imbue their hearts with the spirit of charity.

More than fifteen hundred years ago the professed followers of Christ began to make war upon each other, not for alleged immoralities, or for a violation of the simple precepts of the gospel, but for *opinions* deemed heterodox. And among other errors into which they fell was that of considering mere belief as the essential thing in religion. Of course, it was deemed equally essential that every one should believe *aright.* And as nothing was held to be more damnable than error, therefore it came to be regarded as a religious duty to visit with the severest punishments all forms of religious belief which the majority pronounced heretical. And they vainly imagined that, by pains and penalties inflicted or threatened by ecclesiastical courts, a true faith might be established or a false one rooted out. They were wholly ignorant of the fact that a person's belief, to be of any practical value, or worthy to be called a *belief*, must be free and unconstrained, the result of evidence, moreover, to the mind of the believer.

And that fierce war of opinion among Christians, which began in the third century and raged with such unrelenting fury at the Council of Nice, has—with occasional intermissions, it is true, and its rancor at times somewhat abated—been going on ever since. No considerable portion of the Christian Church has ever abandoned the principle so early adopted, that it is proper and right to attempt, by pains and penalties, to enforce a uniformity of religious belief. Persecution for opinions honestly entertained has been practised throughout Christendom alike by Protestants and Catholics. Both of these great bodies have, from time to time, excommunicated and otherwise maltreated some of their best members for alleged errors of opinion. Both have practically inculcated the doctrine that error is sin, therefore meriting punishment. And although there has been a considerable abatement of the venom once displayed toward alleged heresies, yet, even now, you will sometimes hear of Protestant churches excommunicating some of their most estimable members for alleged unsoundness of religious belief. What proportion of the churches in our country that style themselves " evangelical " would admit the possibility of a man's being saved who does not believe in a vicarious atonement? And how many of them, were they fully aware of a member's disbelief or rejection of this doctrine, would be willing that he should remain in their communion, however pure and unexceptionable might be his character?

But when we consider how much people's religious beliefs depend on circumstances over which they have no control, and when we further consider how different in the case of different individuals are the circumstances which contribute to form or modify their beliefs, we shall see that perfect agreement in religious *doctrines*, in all their details and minor points, is hardly to be expected. We shall see that if all are left in freedom, and are encouraged, as they should be, to examine carefully, think freely, and decide independently, each for himself, there will inevitably be a diversity of opinion on some, perhaps on many points. People are, by inheritance, so differently endowed that, were they all subjected to exactly the same training, they would not, *could* not, view every truth alike, nor attach precisely the same weight to evidence. But they are not all trained alike. They are very differently educated. They are, from the cradle, surrounded by different intellectual, moral, and religious influences. They receive different kinds and degrees of religious instruction. They attend different churches; become accustomed to different forms of worship; hear different kinds of preaching; read different religious books; are taught different religious doctrines—all deriving some support, it may be, from portions of the Word understood according to the sense of the letter.

Now, assuming that all are alike honest and conscientious, alike sincere in their desire to know the truth, is it likely that they would or could cordially agree in their doctrinal beliefs? How is it possible, in view of the wide difference known to exist in respect to both intellectual and religious training as well as hereditary endowments, that they should all believe precisely alike? How is it possible that they should all understand the Bible in all its parts just alike?

Yet there are many things in the Bible (and herein are displayed the infinite wisdom and mercy of the Lord), and these, too, the all-important and most essential things, about which there is no room for an honest difference of opinion. They are passages wherein the spirit of the Divine Word is exhibited in its simplicity and nakedness, in a form to be seen and understood by all. Such passages, for example, as the ten commandments, and those simple precepts which inculcate the importance of love to God and the neighbor, purity of heart, integrity and justice, a meek, resigned, forbearing, honest, self-denying, loving, trustful spirit. On various points of doctrine (so called) men may differ, honestly and sometimes widely; but so often and so plainly is the life of love or charity insisted on—the keeping of the commandments, doing justly by every one—that there is no room for honest men to differ about the requirements or teaching of the Bible in this regard. All, therefore, may agree about the importance and necessity of a life of charity. And so far as people are imbued with the spirit of charity, which is the spirit of heaven, acquired by keeping the Lord's commandments, they will not allow intellectual differences to separate them very widely.

And as a matter of fact, we find this to be actually the case. We all acknowledge that there are some pure-minded, noble, upright, conscientious, charitable people in all Christian communions,—yes, and outside of all the churches,—humble followers of the Lord, who have drunk of his spirit and grown to be in some measure like Him, finding their supreme delight in doing good. However these people may differ from each other doctrinally, they are really one at heart; one in spirit; one in the great ruling purpose of their lives; one in their adoration and supreme love of Him, and in their desire and efforts to serve Him, who is Love itself and Wisdom itself.

Not perfect agreement, then, in all matters of faith or doctrine is expected or ever to be insisted on in that New and true church of the Lord, whose day is beginning to break. In this church *life* is held to be of more consequence than *belief*, charity is regarded as paramount to faith, practice of more value than theory, religiously living or keeping the commandments a matter of far greater moment than any amount of right believing. It is harder, too. According to the New Church there are but three doctrines that are essential to be believed, essential to Christian fellowship. These are: "An acknowledgment of the Lord's Divinity, an acknowledgment of the holiness of the Word, and the life which is called charity." (D. P. 259.)

All who hold these fundamentals of the Christian religion, and at the same time live the life of charity, are in fellowship with the angels of the New Christian heaven, and are to be recognized as belonging to the Lord's church on earth. They are all one in the Lord, one in the spirit and temper of their minds, and are really members of the New Jerusalem, whatever creed they may have subscribed, whatever name they may bear, or whatever may be their external church relations. Herein lies the grand distinction between the Old and the New Christian Church. The former held faith or mere belief to be the thing of supreme importance; the latter holds charity to be the essential thing. One said, *Believe;* the other says, believe and *Do.* One affirms that you cannot enter heaven unless you assent to certain doctrinal statements; the other says, in the words of the Divine Master, "If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments."

In confirmation of what has been here said I would refer you to a few passages from the writings of the herald of the New Church. (Read ex. from A. C. 1799, 2385, 3451, 1032, 4468.)

The same heaven-illumined teacher further says that "there are some of all denominations who are endowed with conscience" (A. C. 2053); that, notwithstanding "there are so many diverse dogmas and doctrinals, several of which are altogether heretical [erroneous], yet in every one of them salvation is attainable" (ib. 3993); that "heresies themselves do not occasion a man's condemnation, but an evil life does" (D. S. S. 92); "that every one, in whatever heresy he may be with respect to his understanding, may still be reformed and saved, provided he shuns evils as sins" (D. P. 259); that "falsities with those who are in the good of life are accepted as truths" (A. C. 10, 109), for this good "drives away all the malignity of the false" (ib. 9809); for "when the end is to do good, then falsities are regarded by the Lord and in heaven not as falsities but as simulations of the truth, and according to the quality of innocence are accepted as truths" (ib. 7887); and that, however many or pure truths a person may believe, "if he does not give them life by willing and doing them," he is really, because practically, in the doctrine of salvation by faith alone (Ap. Ex. 458).

So large and catholic and tolerant in its spirit, so truly liberal, yet discriminating and just, is the church symbolized by the New Jerusalem of the Apocalypse! So different from the churches that have gone before, which have made belief primary, and have condemned and excommunicated persons of upright and blameless lives for some alleged errors of the head! This is the church that is, everywhere, inside and outside of all the sects, descending from God out of heaven, for its principles and its spirit are from on high. Not disparaging nor undervaluing religious truths, and itself teaching the very highest truths, it is at the same time tolerant as no other church ever was toward all forms of religious belief, holding that, in spite of their defects and errors, salvation is possible under them all. Like an affectionate mother, she has a sweet smile for all God's children of whatever name or creed; throws her arms lovingly around them, and claims them as a part of herself; and she recognizes as His children all who seek to do the Heavenly Father's will so far as they understand it, for all such have the Father's name written in their foreheads. Recognizing the wondrous harmony and unity, along with endless variety, existing throughout creation, this church does not aim at, nor expect, entire uniformity in doctrine or ritual. On the contrary, it believes and teaches that there will be, ought to be, must be, the same diversity in the church on earth that there is in the church in heaven—the same that we find among the different members of the human body and throughout the universe of God. And this diversity, when all hearts are filled and animated by the blessed spirit of the Master, instead of distracting or dividing, will render the union and harmony stronger and more perfect.

Such, and so catholic in its spirit, is the true Christian Church, the Church of the New Jerusalem, the church that has already begun to be established on earth. May all those of us who accept the principles and doctrines of this church study to exemplify in our lives something of its largeness, its toleration, its grand catholicity, as well as its pure and sweet and gentle spirit.

IX.

KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS.

He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.—JOHN XIV, 21.

Man was created to be free and happy; for there can be no happiness without freedom. And what is it to be truly free? Is it to act just as one wishes or is inclined to act? By no means. To be truly free is to be *rationally* subject to law. There can be no freedom, consequently no happiness, where there is no law. And he who yields the most implicit obedience to law is the freest and happiest. God is the freest of all beings; yet, at the same time, is He most subject unto law, for He is Law itself, and the Source of all law and order in the universe. He cannot act contrary to law, for this would be to act contrary to Himself. As a modern poet has truly said:—

"Verily, the mighty Lawgiver hath subjected Himself
    unto laws,
And God is the primal grand example of free, unstrained obedience.
His perfection is limited by right, and cannot trespass
    into wrong,
Because He hath established Himself as the fountain
    of only good.

Unto God there exist impossibilities; for the True One
cannot lie,
Nor the Wise One wander from the track which He
hath determined for Himself."

Thus the freest Being in the universe, the Being from whom all true freedom and happiness are derived, is of all others the most subject unto law. Among rational and intelligent creatures, therefore, those must be most truly free and happy who yield the most implicit obedience to law, the laws of their being; for they most nearly resemble their Creator. And the only way in which man can come into a state to receive, and be blessed by, the Father's love, is to yield himself freely to the laws of that love.

Now the laws of our spiritual being are all known to Him who created us, and to Him alone. And these laws—as many of them, at least, as we can understand—have been revealed for our instruction. They are all contained in the Word of the Lord, and are what are meant by His commandments. And we are told that the substance of them all is embraced in the two commandments which require love to the Lord and love to the neighbor; for it is said that "on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." And we are told that the second of these commandments is like unto the first, because obedience to the first implies obedience to the second also. We cannot really love God unless we love our neighbor. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

The commandments of the Lord embrace all the laws of our spiritual being. They are all contained in the Word, and are not to be thought of separate from the Lord Himself, for they are not separate. He *is* the Word. From Him these laws derive all their efficacy and life. He dwells in them comparatively as the life and love of a kind parent dwells in the precepts that he gives his children, but in a manner much more full and perfect. Now, a child that really loves its father, when it has arrived at years of discretion, will seek to please him in all things. It will seek to please him by yielding a prompt and cheerful obedience to its father's commandments. It knows that disobedience to his commands will displease him. And a willingness to displease its father is an evidence that it does not really love him. We are always anxious to please those whom we truly love. And we know that we please them by *doing* as they desire to have us do. And this is to do their will. This, of course, supposes that the will of those whom we love is good, and that their commands are, therefore, reasonable and just.

Now, this is the way, and the only way, that we can show our love of the Heavenly Father. It is by doing His precepts. His precepts, as revealed in His Word, are the laws of our spiritual life. And we cannot enjoy the happiness of which we are capable, and for which we were designed, except so far as we understand and obey the laws of this spiritual life. We know that this is the case in regard to our bodies. These are what are called laws of health—certain conditions indispensable to bodily health and comfort. Men have had nothing to do with affixing these conditions or framing these laws. They were made by Him who created us, and it is for us to discover and obey them. We all know that it is impossible to enjoy bodily health unless we understand and obey the laws of health. How, then, can we expect to enjoy spiritual health, or the happiness which as spiritual beings we are capable of, unless we understand and obey the laws of our spiritual life? How can it be otherwise than that disobedience to the laws of spiritual life should be followed by spiritual disease and suffering? It is in mercy to us, therefore, that we have not been left in ignorance of these laws of spiritual life. They have been revealed solely for our good. And the same infinite love that revealed them is desirous that we should obey them for the same reason; and He is ever present in these laws to impart unto us the disposition and the power to obey them. And as these laws are not to be thought of as separate from the Lawgiver, therefore we truly love Him only when we love His laws. And if we love these, we shall love and endeavor above all things to obey them. As the Lord Himself says: "If a man love me he will keep my words." "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." "Ye are my friends if ye *do* whatsoever I command you." "If ye love me, keep my commandments." And in the words of our text, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."

Here, then, is the divine standard, and hence the only true standard, by which to estimate our love of the Lord; it is the anxiety we feel to *do* His precepts. Any other standard than this is false and deceptive. We may profess to love the Lord, and may even persuade ourselves that we do; but if we are not careful to do His precepts, our love is spurious and our professions vain. We may attend punctually to all the ordinances of religion; we may devote a portion of every day to prayer and the reading of the Word; we may go to the Holy Supper, and be regular in our attendance at church on the Sabbath, but we greatly err if we regard these things as an *end*, or anything more than the means or helps to a good life. We err if we suppose that any of these things, in themselves and separate from a life of charity, to which they are designed to lead us, are particularly well pleasing to the Lord. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord. Bring no more vain oblations." "Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?"

The ordinances of the gospel,—prayer, the reading of the Word and the Writings of the church, and the ministrations of the Sabbath,—are indeed important, highly important. They are important as a means of opening our minds to the things of heaven, and drawing us more fully within the sphere and under the influence of the Lord's love, and strengthening in our hearts the disposition to do His precepts. And all who earnestly desire the companionship of the angels, who desire to have their minds imbued with the principles of charity, and to act in conjunction with heaven, will desire to avail themselves of all the orderly means which the Lord has provided for our regeneration.

But we must not think of regarding these things as *more* than means. We must be careful lest we fall into the error of supposing that when we have carefully attended to these things our *religious* duties are performed. Our religious duties are the daily duties and concerns of each one's life, which ought to be performed in a religious spirit, in the spirit of neighborly love, and in humble acknowledgment of, and dependence upon, the Lord. If our daily prayers and Sabbath worship, our reading of the Word and the Writings of the church, fail to impress our minds with the importance and necessity of obeying the Lord's precepts, they fail of their legitimate effect. If they do not make us more watchful over our thoughts, feelings, motives, and actions, in the common business and intercourse of daily life; if they do not make us more honest, sincere, and just in our dealings with our neighbor; if they do not make us more kind, forbearing, and forgiving toward one another, more devoted to the performance of good uses from neighborly love, and more patient, resigned, and cheerful under the various allotments of life; if they do not fill us with a deeper sense of the continual presence of the Lord, and of our obligation *to do* His commandments, then they are all to no purpose. They are but the tithe of mint and anise and cummin, wherewith we, like the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees of old, hope to propitiate the Divine favor.

We may all know, then, whether we really love the Lord, and in what degree we love Him, by considering whether we love and endeavor to do His commandments; whether we govern our feelings and conduct according to the laws of heaven which He has revealed to us. It is said in the revelations made through Swedenborg:—

> "To love the Lord is not to love His person, but to love those things that proceed from Him, for these are the Lord with man; thus it is to love what is itself sincere, what is itself right, what is itself just; and inasmuch as these things are the Lord, therefore, in proportion as man loves them, and acts from them, in the same proportion he loves and acts from the Lord; and in the same proportion the Lord removes things insincere and unjust as to the very intentions of the will, wherein their roots are." Ap. Ex. 973.

But to keep the Lord's commandments involves a great deal, much more than some may at first imagine. It is not enough that we keep them in their outward form, or according to the letter merely; for this we may do, while at the same time we violate their spirit. In this case we do not keep them in reality, but only in appearance. Thus it is not enough that we refrain from outward acts of evil, but we must refrain from the indulgence of those evil dispositions and feelings from which the outward acts proceed; for "from within, out of the heart," saith the Lord, "proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Hence we are commanded to "cleanse first that which is within the cup and the platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." And we refrain from evil dispositions and feelings only when we regard their indulgence as sinful, and inwardly look to the Lord in earnest prayer that He would remove them far from us. It is not enough that we do good to our neighbor; for this we may do from purely selfish and worldly motives. But if we would keep the Lord's commandments, we must do good from love toward our neighbor, or from a desire to render ourselves in the highest degree useful. For the Lord says, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you." Not that we are required to love each other in the same degree that the Lord loves us; for this is impossible. But the meaning is that our love for one another ought to be of a quality similar to the Lord's love for us. It ought to be disinterested, like His. It ought to be such love as intends use, such as regards the good of others, and not merely the good of one's self. For the Lord's love is the love of others out of itself. It is the love of performing uses, the love of doing good to all, of blessing all, of saving all; in this it is never weary. And in the degree that we dwell in the Lord, and His love dwells in us, we shall feel toward each other somewhat as He feels toward us. Our ends and aims will be similar to His. We shall seek the good of our neighbor in all we intend and do, as He continually seeks our good. We shall desire to do good *to* others, more than to obtain good *from* them. We shall not think how we may make others serve us, but how we may best serve them. This is the love that reigns in heaven and in all heavenly states of mind; and it is the kind referred to in the commandment to love one another as the Lord loves us.

And not only is it true that those who really love the Lord will love and keep His commandments, but it is equally true that *by doing* the commandments we learn to love them. We do not love them in our natural state, because they are opposed to the loves that rule us in this state. Therefore we must do the commandments in the first instance, when we feel an aversion to doing them, when the task is an unpleasant one. We must compel ourselves to do them. By this means we learn, after a time, to love them. The man whose body has become sickly and enfeebled through long neglect of exercise, feels an aversion to labor or to motion of any kind. The very thought of bodily exertion is painful to him. But when, through self-compulsion at first, he has overcome this reluctance and acquired strength and vigor in his limbs by exerting them, then exercise becomes a luxury and a delight.

So with a child who finds it hard to submit to due restraints and just regulations. Let him be *forced* through fear of punishment to submit, and however reluctant may be his obedience at first, it will gradually become more prompt and cheerful; and at length there will be found growing up within him a due respect and love for the authority under which he is placed. But suffer the child to have his own way, let him disregard and disobey with impunity the just rules of the family and the school, and very soon he will lose all respect for those rules, and in his heart will despise both parents and teachers. Or, let a man disregard and violate the laws of the State with impunity, and very soon he will come to despise the laws and the law-makers.

So true is it in all cases that obedience to law is the very foundation of all reverence and love of law. By *forcing* ourselves to obey just laws, we come at last to love those laws; whereas through wilful neglect and disobedience we soon come to hate and despise those laws in our hearts. This is a universal truth. If we would love the Lord, therefore, or, what is the same, if we would love His commandments, we must commence by compelling ourselves to do those commandments because it is His will.

But whether we keep His commandments or not, however we feel toward Him, or however we feel and act toward one another, He never ceases to love us. However we may turn our faces away from Him, He never turns His face away from us. His spirit never ceases to strive with our spirits, nor relaxes its endeavors to lead us in the path of life and peace. Though we sin against Him, He bears long with us, and loves us still, and pursues us through all our wanderings with outstretched arms of mercy, and is ever ready to clasp us to His bosom.

But in our state of disobedience to His precepts it does not appear as if the Lord had such tender love and care for us. Though His radiant face is shining full upon us then, yet we do not see its light, nor feel its warmth, because our faces are turned away from Him. His love and life are shut out from our hearts until we attend to His voice and open the door; until by faith and repentance we turn to Him and begin to do His commandments. Then first we begin to realize how He has always felt toward us. Then first we begin to feel the warm breath of His love which has ever yearned to save and bless us. Then first we see the benignant arms that have ever been outstretched to clasp us to our Father's bosom.

And thus we find that as soon as we arise and go to our Father, in the spiritual sense, and say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son," our Father runs to meet us when yet a great way off, has compassion upon us, falls on our neck and kisses us. Hence, in our text, the Lord says of him who keepeth His commandments, that *he shall be loved of my Father.* By the *Father* is denoted the Lord in respect to His divine love. And although this love is always exercised toward us, is always active in doing us good, yet we do not realize it, because we do not receive it so as to feel it within ourselves and enjoy its delights until we begin to keep the commandments. Then the divine love is manifested to our minds, and we realize, as we could not before, that we are loved of the Father. We then begin to know the good of the Lord's love, as those only *can* know it who do His precepts. Thus we learn by experience that "in keeping the commandments there is great reward."

Then also the Lord begins to manifest Himself to our minds as our Redeemer and Saviour. He makes manifest to us the power of truth when united to good, the power of the Human when brought at one with the Divine. He gives us to perceive something of the nature of that love which comes down to men in their low estate, the love that flows from the Divine Humanity, the love that is forever seeking to save that which was lost. Hence He says of him who keeps His commandments, *and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.* The Lord's redeeming love, His love of saving us from our sins, and making us happy to all eternity, cannot be made known to our minds until we do His precepts; for it is through faith and obedience that this love is received by us. We must subject ourselves to the laws of love before we can know the delights of that love, of which the laws are but the form or manifestation. The Lord is evermore standing and knocking at the door of each one of our hearts; but before He can come in and sup with us, and we with Him, before He can manifest Himself to our minds or give us to feel the power and excellence of His redeeming love, we must, as of ourselves, attend to His voice and open the door, *i. e.*, we must do His commandments. Then, and then only, can He manifest Himself to us as our Redeemer and Saviour. Then, and then only, can He really come unto us and make His abode with us.

And when the Lord really makes His abode with us, our hearts are suffused with heavenly charity. His holy spirit, the spirit of humility, gentleness, forbearance, and of disinterested neighborly love, the spirit of truth, which is love, is the animating principle of all our actions, the very breath of our life. Therefore, to those who love Him and keep His commandments He promises " another Comforter," even " the spirit of truth, which the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth in you and shall be in you." Then also we experience that inward and sweet serenity, that spiritual peace, that heavenly rest, which nothing on earth can give, a rest which only those can know who rest in the Lord; agreeable to His own words: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." Then, too, we become spiritually free, free from the degrading bondage to evil spirits, free from the galling chains of selfishness and sin. Being the willing and rational subjects of law, we enjoy true liberty, the liberty of the sons of God. We are free, indeed; made so through voluntary obedience to the laws of love. For "if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

X.

THE BITTER WATERS OF MARAH.

And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah; for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree (lit., a piece of wood) ; *which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.*—Ex. xv, 23, 24, 25.

"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, because they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah." This is said of the children of Israel, by whom are denoted God's spiritual Israel, all regenerating men and women, all who have broken away from their bondage to Satan and taken up their march through the spiritual wilderness toward the heavenly Canaan. The true meaning of the word *Israelites*, according to its etymology in the Hebrew, is, *the warriors of God*, being composed of two words, one of which means *God*, and the other, *to fight* or *make war*. And the true warriors of God are those who put on the armor and wield the weapons of God, which are all spiritual, according to Paul's teaching, and who resolutely fight against those things in themselves, or in others, which are contrary to the spirit, laws, government, and kingdom of God. They are all who have begun to follow the Lord in the regeneration, and are therefore warring against the very same forces, the powers of darkness, which He warred against while glorifying the Humanity; that is, against every thought and propensity which is contrary to the Divine Wisdom and Love. All such are God's chosen people, the true and real Israelites. They do internally and spiritually the things which correspond to what the Israelites of old (who were a merely representative church) did externally and naturally.

Marah in the Hebrew means *bitter*. Hence the reason assigned for the name of this place, "because the waters thereof were bitter." All *places* mentioned in Scripture denote certain states of mind. *Marah* denotes a state of spiritual temptation or inward conflict. By the Israelites *coming* to Marah, therefore, is meant the coming of God's spiritual Israel into the state denoted by Marah, that is, into a state of internal conflict.

It is impossible for any one to reach the heavenly Canaan, or to come into an orderly and regenerate state, without many a conflict with the foes of his own household, the selfish and evil propensities of the natural man. These conflicts are the temptation combats, of which such frequent mention is made in the writings of the New Church. They are also what is symbolized in the Word by the *cross*, which all the sincere followers of the Lord are required to take up. All, therefore, who are journeying toward the spiritual Canaan must come to Marah.

Spiritual temptations are occasioned by evil spirits, who assail us as often as we refuse to be led by them. They can take place, therefore, with none but those who have begun to be regenerated. We must first be led to see what infernal life is, and to desire its opposite, the life of heaven. We must come to desire goodness and truth for their own sake, before we can have any experience of that inward conflict called temptation. So long as we are in a state of indifference in regard to spiritual and heavenly life, caring nothing about truth for its own sake (and if we ever act conformably to it, doing so from purely selfish and worldly considerations), so long evil spirits do not molest us; for then our life is not in opposition to, but in agreement with, their own. The infernals will not assail us while we act in conjunction with them, while we voluntarily do their bidding. But when we begin to resist their influence, and strive to be delivered from it, when we begin in good earnest to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then commences an internal warfare, a conflict between heaven and hell in the soul. Then evil spirits commence their assault upon us, or upon the angelic spirits who are influencing us, which is felt as an inward conflict, a certain agony of the spirit. Hell is warring against heaven within us. "Michael and his angels fight against the dragon, and the dragon fights and his angels." *The same is exemplified on earth among evil men while we act with them and do their bidding, or when we oppose them and their devices.*

Spiritual temptations, then, are certain inward conflicts endured for the kingdom of heaven's sake. They are occasioned by the assaults of infernal spirits as soon as such spirits perceive that we are beginning to turn away from them and follow after the Lord. Such temptations, therefore, cannot take place until the things of heaven have begun to acquire some degree of vitality within us. There may be experiences which appear somewhat like them, and which are sometimes *called* temptations, such as various natural trials, sickness, disappointments, loss of property, reputation, friends, persecutions, and the like. These may be called natural, but they are not spiritual, temptations. They are trying to the natural feelings, and are often endured in their greatest severity by merely natural men, persons who have no regard for the principles of heavenly life. And they may be very useful to such persons. They may be to the soul what the plough and harrow are to the green-sward; they may turn it up and loosen and soften and mellow the soil, and so prepare it for heavenly seed and noble growths. Thus they may be a means of preparing the way and introducing to spiritual temptations. On this subject we are taught as follows in the Heavenly Arcana:—

> "There are spiritual temptations and there are natural temptations. Spiritual temptations are of the internal man, but natural are of the external man; spiritual temptations sometimes exist without natural temptations, sometimes with them; natural temptations are, when a man suffers as to the body, as to honors, as to wealth,—in a word, as to natural life, as is the case in diseases, misfortunes, persecutions, punishments not grounded in justice, and the like; the anxieties which exist on such occasions are what are meant by natural temptations; but these temptations do at all affect his spiritual life, neither can they be called temptations, but griefs; for they exist from the hurt of the natural life, which is of self-love and the love of the world; the wicked are sometimes the subjects of these griefs, who grieve and are tormented the more in proportion as they love themselves and the world more, and thus derive life thence. But

spiritual temptations are of the internal man and assault his spiritual life; the anxieties on such occasions are not on account of any loss of natural life, but on account of the loss of faith and charity, and consequently of salvation; these temptations are frequently induced by natural temptations, for when man is in these latter, viz., in disease, grief, the loss of wealth or of honor, and the like, if at such times a thought occurs concerning the Lord's aid, concerning His providence, concerning the state of the evil that they glory and exult, when the good suffer and undergo various griefs and various losses,—in such case spiritual temptation is conjoined to natural temptation. Such was the last temptation of the Lord, in Gethsemane, and when He suffered the cross, which was the most severe of all." A. C. 8164.

To determine whether the state of inward anxiety and suffering into which we are brought at any time be a state of spiritual or of merely natural temptation, we have only to examine ourselves and see whether our anxiety is occasioned by facts or considerations affecting our merely natural life, or whether we grieve on account of our remoteness from the Lord, our obscurity in respect to spiritual truth, our lack of heavenly charity. If it be on account of the latter, we have come to the state signified by *Marah*.

"And they could not drink of the waters of Marah, because they were bitter." *Waters* correspond to and signify truths; and *bitter* waters, truths that are disagreeable.

In our first states of regeneration, and often in succeeding states, our evils are quiescent, and the goodnesses and truths of heaven flow freely into our minds and are received with delight. The wild beasts have all retired to their hiding places, and we rejoice in the glad beams of the Son of righteousness as He rises upon us "with healing in his wings." The heavens within us are opened, and the spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, descends like a dove and lights upon us; and we hear a voice from heaven sweetly whispering, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This voice is the voice of Truth, the beloved of the Father, the very offspring and manifested form of the Divine Love. In this exalted state we are ready to exclaim with the Psalmist, "O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" And it appears to us in this state as if the truths which now fill us with so great joy would never be otherwise than delightful to us. It appears as if they had already become assimilated to our spirits, woven into the very fabric of our being, so as to make a part of ourselves. But it is not so in reality; and before it can become so we must undergo much inward conflict, many spiritual temptations. Not yet are our evils conquered; they are merely in a quiescent state. The wild beasts have not yet been driven out of the land, no, nor destroyed, nor tamed, but only put to sleep. By and by our slumbering evils are aroused. Some little circumstance awakens them and they arise in all their terrible strength and fierceness; and the very truths which so delighted us but a little while before are undelightful now. They are undelightful because they expose in all their loathsome deformity the evil dispositions which spring from our very life's love, and which we, therefore, love to indulge. We wish that we had never known these truths, because they require us to do what we now find so difficult and unpleasant, and condemn us for not doing it. Thus they are undelightful to us, because they are opposed to the evils that still cling to us and make a part of our life, and are in agreement with loves which have not yet become ours. Thus in our journey through the wilderness we have come to Marah; and we cannot drink of its waters because they are bitter.

"Therefore he called the name thereof *Marah.*" *Names* in the Word denote spiritual qualities or states. *Marah* denotes a state of temptation, a state when truths are undelightful from the absence of good, and from want of those pure and innocent affections (not yet matured), which are in agreement with the truths.

"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" By Moses is meant the Word of the Lord, or the Lord in respect to divine truth. For this is the great spiritual leader of all who are meant by *Israelites.* When the truth is disagreeable for lack of the affection for goodness, we feel an inward repugnance to it. Our minds turn away from it as from something offensive. This is always the case, in a greater or less degree, in states of temptation. We inwardly murmur against the very truths which had previously, and on their first reception, seemed delightful. We cannot endure them. And this inward repugnance to divine truth, experienced in states of temptation, is what is meant in the spiritual sense by the people's murmuring against Moses.

There are times all along on the journey from Egypt to Canaan—*i. e.*, in our progress from a natural to a spiritual state—when our evils are quiescent. At such times heavenly truths are delightful to us. We drink them in with avidity and with an exquisite relish. They are to our souls what draughts of cool spring water are to thirsty and fainting travelers. But when our evils are active, when we are in states of temptation, then the same truths are undelightful; we have no affection for them; they are bitter to our taste; and we inwardly murmur against the Divine Wisdom which has thus far led us on, saying, "What shall we drink?" *To drink*, spiritually, is to receive truth with affection, as those do whose souls thirst for the waters of life. But when truths are disagreeable to us on account of evils excited in our external man, which prevent the influx of good from the internal, then we are come to the bitter waters of Marah, and we murmur against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

"And he cried to Jehovah." This teaches us what we are to do in such a state: we are to look to the Lord, and earnestly pray to Him; and He will make the bitter waters sweet, yet not without our co-operation. It is said that Moses cried to Jehovah, by which is meant that the persons here treated of are led to do so under the guiding influence of the Word signified by Moses.

And when we are brought into this state, and cease to have confidence in ourselves, but humbly look to the Lord and earnestly implore His strength and guidance, then we are given to see the cause of the disagreeableness in the truths which had so delighted us before.

Our minds are opened and so illuminated by the Lord, that we are enabled to see that our evil loves, which have not yet been subdued or put away, are the cause. And in this state we desire their removal, and desire also that affection for goodness which alone gives zest and pleasantness to truths. And when we see and inwardly acknowledge our evils, and humbly invoke the divine aid that we may overcome them, then the Lord flows into our souls with the opposite affections of goodness, which are in agreement with the truths; and thus these waters of Marah are made sweet. This is what is meant in the spiritual sense by the words that follow: "And Jehovah showed him a [piece of wood] tree; and he cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet." By *wood* in the spiritual sense is meant goodness, or the affection of goodness. And by Jehovah's *showing him the wood* is meant the being brought through the influence of the Divine Love into a state to perceive the goodness, or the quality of affection, which that Love is continually endeavoring to insinuate; into a state to perceive and feel that our own evils are what render heavenly truths unpleasant to our taste; and that the affection of goodness—love, charity, good-will, involving self-humiliation and self-abnegation—is all that is needed to sweeten the bitter waters of Marah.

By his casting the wood into the waters is meant such an infusion of the good of love or charity into truths as to change for us their quality and take from them all their bitterness. By the waters *being made sweet* is meant that the truths, rendered bitter by the activity of our evils, become pleasant and delightful through the influx of the opposite good affections. It is goodness which causes us to be pleasantly affected by truth, or which produces in us whatever desire we have for truth. Says the herald of the New Jerusalem: "The delight of the affection of truth originates in no other source than in goodness. This, too, is evident from experience; for they who are in the good of life, that is, who love God and the neighbor, love also the truths of faith. Hence it is that so long as good flows in and is received, so long truth appears delightful; but as soon as good ceases to flow in, that is, as soon as evil begins to predominate and prevent the influx of good, instantly there is experienced a sensation of what is undelightful in truth; for truth and evil mutually reject and hold each other in aversion."

From this it is plain why *wood* (which, spiritually, denotes good) was cast into the waters of Marah, and why those waters were thereby rendered sweet. The same thing occurs at all times and in all places, according to the spiritual sense. The Lord is always able and willing to change the bitter waters into sweet; and He will never fail to do it for all who look to Him in prayer and faith, and open their hearts to the sweet influences of His love. There is nothing in life so bitter—no trial, no duty, no care, no disappointment, no sorrow, no temptation—that the Divine Love cannot sweeten it, if we will but put ourselves in an attitude to receive of its ineffable sweetness. And we put ourselves in this attitude by keeping the commandments—reverently obeying the laws of the Lord. Therefore it is added in the verse following our text: "And the Lord said, If thou wilt diligently hearken in the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee."

XI.

THE PURE IN HEART.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.—MATT. V, 8.

These words are a part of our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, a sermon that may be regarded as an abstract of Christianity, a comprehensive summary of the Christian religion. And they express that sure and everlasting connection existing between virtue and happiness, righteousness and peace, which is everywhere taught in the spiritual sense of the Word. Who does not recognize in them at once the sign and seal of inspiration? Clearly do they seem to have emanated from the same fountain of truth and goodness, which furnishes the sunshine and the rain, which causes the grass to grow and the flowers to blossom. All nature is vocal with this same utterance; and the experience of myriads of regenerated human spirits affirms the truth of the declaration, that the pure in heart are blessed.

Three things are suggested by our text which claim especial attention:—

1. Who are the pure in heart?
2. What is meant by seeing God?
3. The blessedness promised.

1. Who are the pure in heart? None are so absolutely, but only relatively or approximately. Even

the angelic heavens themselves are not pure in the sight of God. But they whose motives are pure and good, whose ruling love is, in its noble unselfishness, allied to the Lord's love, whose governing purpose it is to do always the will of the Heavenly Father,—such are called in the language of Holy Writ "pure in heart." The *heart*, as all Christians know, is used in Scripture—as it is also in familiar discourse—to denote the will-principle in man, or the affections of the will—the love element, whether good or bad. Thus the Psalmist prays, "Incline my *heart* to Thy testimonies." "Let my *heart* be sound in Thy statutes." "Incline not my *heart* to any evil thing." And in the gospel of Matthew (xv) we read, "For out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies," etc. In all of which passages it is plain that the *heart* is used to denote the dominant love, or the affections of the will.

And so, too, in familiar discourse, we speak of persons of warm affections, of a large, generous, and unselfish will, as warm-*hearted*, or large and generous-*hearted;* while those of an opposite character—all mean, calculating, and selfish people—are spoken of as cold-*hearted*, *heartless*, or without *heart*. And Christians who desire more of God's love in their wills are in the habit of praying that their *hearts* may be filled with His love.

The *heart*, then, is used in Scripture as the symbol of man's will or love; and this is one of the symbols or correspondences which has never been lost sight of in the church; for all Christians give a spiritual meaning to this word. As the heart is the seat and fountain of life to the body, so is the will the seat and fountain of life to the spirit. And as the blood, distributed to all parts of the body by the action of the heart, must be first cleansed and prepared for its office by the pure breath of heaven in the lungs, else the body will pine and sicken, so must the affections of the will be enlightened and purified by God's truth received into the understanding, else the soul will not be in health, the spirit will not bloom with an immortal vigor. There is a most beautiful and perfect analogy here. It is the pure air which can alone purify the blood and render it capable of imparting health and joy to the body; and so, too, it is the precious truth of God's own Word which alone can purify the affections, so that these shall impart health and gladness to the spirit. It is the noxious exhalations from the earth which render the atmosphere foul and unwholesome; and so it is the still more noxious exhalations from our own earth-cleaving minds, the vapors which arise from passion, prejudice, hate, and all selfish and evil feelings, which defile the Lord's truth and unfit it for imparting health and elasticity to the spirit.

The pure in heart, then, are all those whose love has become purified, or whose wills have become regenerated through the power of divine truth. The state of the natural or unregenerate heart is one of supreme selfishness. It is full of evil inclinations, unholy passions, and filthy lusts, all originating in the love of self, which is the ruling love of each one of us in our unregenerate state. And the supreme love of self is essential impurity. It is this which defiles the sanctuary of the Lord, the human soul, rendering it "the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." It is this inward spiritual impurity to which the Lord refers when He says by the mouth of His prophet, "Wash you; make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes." Also when He says: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes. . . And I will save you from all your uncleannesses" (Ezek. xxxvi, 25–27–29).

By the *clean water* wherewith the Lord promises to cleanse His people is signified divine truth from Himself; for it is by means of truth from the Word of the Lord, truth received, understood, and obeyed, that the selfishness of the natural heart is overcome, and thus the soul's impurity washed away. And in the degree that we are cleansed of this inward defilement of self-love and the Lord puts His spirit within us, we are regenerated, born again, renewed in the spirit and temper of our minds, made pure in heart. We are animated by a love similar to that of our Divine Master, a love that centers not on self, but pours itself forth in deeds of use, kindness, and mercy on those around us. Then only is our love like the Lord's love, when our ends and aims are similar to His; when we seek not our own good but the good of others; when our great and constant purpose is to employ whatever gifts have been bestowed upon us in a manner most useful to the neighbor.

The Lord's love is like the beams of the unwearied sun. It is continually pouring itself out, continually seeking to impart itself to others, continually seeking to save and bless, continually striving to make men receptive of its own unutterable delights. With what unspeakable tenderness does that love yearn to deliver us from the pollution of guilt and sin! How it follows us all our lives, through all the crooked, filthy ways where Satan delights to lead us! How it frustrates our earthly hopes, defeats our selfish aims, wounds our natural pride, balks our vaulting ambition, disappoints our worldly expectations, hedges up the pathway which our unbridled self-love marks out! And all for our own good, that it may open up within us a purer and nobler life! How it sends sickness, disappointment, sorrow, pain, suffering in myriad forms, all ministers of mercy, to check our wanderings in forbidden paths, block up some gateway to the realms of woe, and lead us to the heavenly mansions!

Yes; it is in the very nature of true love to seek never its own, to have no thought of itself, its own ease, pleasure, or advancement of any kind; but to watch and strive, labor and wait, sacrifice and suffer, for the good of others. And such is the Lord's nature, for He is Love itself; and this is purity itself. And in the degree that we become conjoined to Him through a life of obedience to His precepts we become like Him; He dwells in us and we in Him; our ends and aims are similar to His; our hearts are the abode of His pure and unselfish love; we live to do good and to be mediums of heaven's light and warmth to those around us;

it is our delight to watch and labor and suffer for the welfare and happiness of others; we are pure in heart.

"But, oh!" you will say, "how far off this state of pure unselfish love seems from me! How different from *my* state! It seems as if I never should reach it! I long for this heart-purity, but it never comes. I desire to be unselfish, to live and labor for others' good, or from a genuine love of use; but I can't do it. Self-love seems to mingle more or less in all my motives. Some selfish considerations enter into all my plans and purposes. I do nothing from pure love of the Lord or the neighbor." Undoubtedly you are right, my brother. And your case is not peculiar. You have described what is probably the state of most, if not all of us. But happy are you if you can see and acknowledge yourself far from the full stature of angelhood or of regenerate manhood. This proves, at least, that you have taken one step in the right direction. This acknowledgment itself is a germ, a seed-form of the kingdom. It has within it a breath of heavenly life, a spark, at least, of the Lord's own love, which may in time be kindled into a heavenly flame.

Yes; without doubt we all are yet very far from the state of the pure in heart, too far, possibly, to have a very distinct view of what that state really is; too far, undoubtedly, to see all its beauties and glories; and a long and weary way may lie between us and that heavenly Canaan. But that need not discourage us if we are sure that our faces are set in that direction, that we are really traveling toward the promised land. Suppose we have as yet but a mere spark of heaven's pure love in our hearts. The kingdom of heaven is, like all other things, always small at the beginning. But as the Lord's own love is the all in all of that kingdom, it has within it a principle of life which may go on unfolding and strengthening through all eternity, making the heart more and more pure, because a more perfect receptacle of the divine life.

2. But it is said that the pure in heart "shall see God," as if this were their peculiar privilege, a great and glorious reward. What is the meaning of this language? Does it mean simply that they shall enjoy an external and ocular view of God? that they shall behold Him with their bodily eyes merely, as we see the forms and colors of natural objects? This would be natural seeing; and if there were only a natural sense to the Scripture, we might be forced to conclude that this is all that is meant. But the Bible contains a spiritual sense throughout. There is, therefore, a spiritual as well as a natural seeing. And to see spiritually is to perceive with the mind, that is, to understand. Saul *saw* that the Lord was with David; that is, he had an understanding or mental perception of the fact. And the Psalmist says: "O, taste and *see* that the Lord is good;" that is, you will perceive or understand His goodness by tasting or receiving it into your own soul.

Now, when or how do we see a finite human being? I mean the real man. We see his body with our natural eyes, just as we see rocks and trees. But the body is not the real man; therefore we do not truly see the man by merely seeing his body. The mind is the man; and to see a person truly, we must see his mind, that is, we must understand his mental characteristics, his varied powers of thought and feeling; we must see his manhood, his generosity, his magnanimity, his wisdom, his meekness, sincerity, humility, and love; or if he possess not these, then their opposites. It is mind only that can see mind; and we can truly see, that is, can fully understand, only those characteristics of mind, those thoughts and feelings, which we ourselves have had, and therefore know by experience. The measure of this kind of mental or spiritual seeing is in ourselves. Thoughts which we have never had, love which we have never felt, states and feelings, which we have never experienced, aspirations which we have never known, emotions with which our bosoms have never throbbed, —what can we really know of them, or how can we see them in another in the sense of truly understanding them? An ox or other animal may indeed see the *body* of a man, but does he or can he see the *man?* Can the ox see or truly understand those sublime traits which enter into our idea of humanity? Can he see those lofty powers of thought and calculation and analysis, which soar into the heavens, and penetrate the earth, and, wandering through the realms of nature and of spirit, seek to comprehend the universe? Can he understand our æsthetic capacity, our human susceptibility to the power of the beautiful or grand in art or nature? Can he see man's *moral* grandeur, that greatness of soul which scorns all meanness and defies all peril, which reverently heeds the voice of duty, and at her bidding cheerfully offers up life and all that makes life dear, a willing sacrifice on the altar of country, humanity, or religion? No; the ox can see nothing of all this. Then he does not see the real man. He sees only the outward form, the mere shadow. And the obvious reason is, that he has no eye for such seeing. He cannot understand or know anything of these sublime human traits, because he has experienced none of them, has nothing in himself by which to interpret or measure them.

And so it is always. In the highest or spiritual sense of this word *see*, only a human being can see a human being. Yea, more, only like ones can see or understand each other. Only persons of varied and liberal culture can truly *see*, that is, can understand or appreciate, the great masters in literature. Only those of refined tastes and feelings can see or appreciate people of taste and refinement. Only those who have been sorely afflicted, whose hearts have been softened and made tender and sympathetic by pain, misfortune, and sorrow, can truly see, *i. e.*, can come near to and sympathize with, the sick, the unfortunate, and the sorrowing. Who but the bereaved know the pangs of bereavement? Who but a wife knows a wife's affection? Who but a mother knows a mother's love? And who but the virtuous, pure, and unselfish can fully appreciate deeds of lofty heroism, disinterested benevolence, and noble self-sacrifice for the good of humanity? Such deeds do not thrill the selfish, base, and groveling. Those persons do not perceive their grandeur; they do not feel their power or worth; they do not understand their nature; they have no eye for the beauty of heavenly-mindedness or the excellence of true human love. Nor can they really *see* the mind of him who has attained to this great spiritual elevation; for their own minds, through the medium of which alone another's can be seen, are not on the same level, but on a plane far below. Did the selfish and carnal-minded Jews see the Divine Saviour? They saw Him, indeed, but through the medium of their own perverse and impure minds, as you may see a beautiful object through an irregular and dingy piece of glass. You see it, and you do not see it. That is, you do not see it truly, you see it all distorted—not a beautiful but a deformed object. So the character of the Saviour, as seen through the medium of the Jewish minds, was terribly distorted, the very opposite of His true character. To their eyes, He had no form nor comeliness. They had nothing in themselves whereby to measure or interpret His moral grandeur. They did not, could not, see Him.

It is true, then,—nothing can be more true,—that, among men, two minds understand and thus *see* each other by being like each other. And the more nearly they resemble each other,—the closer they approximate spiritually,—the more truly do they see each other.

Pursuing the same train of thought, we may learn what it is to *see God*, and who they are that see Him truly. We see or understand Him by drawing spiritually near to Him, by being spiritually re-created in His own image and likeness, by becoming like Him in the spirit and temper of our minds, having in our hearts a love that resembles His in its sweetness, its purity, its tenderness, its noble, self-sacrificing devotion to the welfare of humanity. Love is the essential element in the Divine character,—pure, unselfish love,—the love of others out of itself. And in the degree that our natural love of self is supplanted by this higher and purer love, such as dwells in and comes from the bosom of God, we come to see and know God. We understand His character through the indwelling of His spirit in ourselves. We see Him through the medium of our renewed and regenerated will, become now the abode of His pure love. And the more unselfish we become, the more willing and desirous we are to live and labor and suffer for others, the more do we become like God, and the more truly do we see Him. We see Him, that is, understand Him—know Him—by virtue of what there is of His own life in us. It is this alone, His disinterested and all-embracing love, dwelling in our hearts with a living and operative energy, leading us to think, feel, and act in a manner similar to what He does,—it is this which reveals to us the true character of God. Therefore the Apostle saith truly, "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." "And every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love."

To impure, selfish, and sinful natures, therefore, the true God must remain forever invisible. No external vision or revelation can ever disclose to them His true character. In the language of an eminent Scotch divine: "They might be taken to heaven and stand before the everlasting throne, yet would the lustrous purity of its great Occupant be all dark and unapparent to them. Divine Being, in its wondrous manifestations, might play around the unrenewed mind, but it would be as a luminous atmosphere bathing blind eyes, or sweet music rippling round deaf ears; the heavenly effluence would not pass inward, could make no thrill of appreciation, no sympathetic delight within the soul. There must, in short, be something God-like in us before we can see and know God; we must be like Him before we can 'see Him as He is.'"* "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

Yes; purity of heart, such as I have explained, this is

> "the golden key
> Which opes the palace of eternity."

It is this which, first revealing God within, dissipates man's moral darkness and then reveals Him in the world without. For to the discerning eye God's love is visibly stamped on all the face of nature. Love paints the clouds, and gems the sky, and colors the landscape. Love beams in sun and stars, breathes in the sighing wind, warbles in the melody of brooks and birds, rustles in the waving grain, and sings evermore in the silent music of the rolling spheres.

Nor in Nature alone do the pure in heart see God. They see Him alike in history, in Providence, in their own private experience, in the written Word, especially in the person of Jesus Christ, the living Incarnation of the Word. Ah! we may have whatever theories we choose about the person of Christ; we may adopt whatever philosophy we please of the Incarnation; we may use whatever solemn phrases, or with the lips apply to Him whatever titles we will—Redeemer, Saviour, God, or Divine Humanity;—but if there has been no inward revelation of Christ to us, if we have not experienced the mighty power of His love working in our hearts to vanquish self and deliver our souls from the thraldom of hell, then we have not truly known Him as Redeemer and Saviour, then we have not seen God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. But the pure in heart have seen Him here; they have been with Him and learned of Him; they have experienced the all-conquering power of love; they have come out of great tribulation, have known the subtle workings of evil, have seen the cunning snares and felt the fiery darts of Satan; they have been with Christ in the wilderness, have suffered with Him in the garden, have followed Him up that memorable hill bending beneath the cross; aye, have descended with Him into hell and risen with Him triumphant over the powers of darkness. And all this through the wisdom, love, and power of Christ, the great Captain of their salvation. He has given them the victory over selfishness and sin, made them meek and gentle and pure and loving like Himself. Verily, then, the pure in heart see God in Christ as others cannot; for they see and have felt the redeeming power of Divine Love. They know their Redeemer from inward experience of His redeeming grace.

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* Rev. John Caird's Sermons.

3. And the promised blessing is theirs. What is that blessing? Life, true life, forevermore; the life of disinterested neighborly love; the freedom of a soul

delivered from the bondage of selfishness and sin; the joy of a thankful, humble, trustful, loving spirit; the delight of doing good and communicating happiness to others; the unutterable peace and bliss which God's own love diffuses through all the chambers of the soul. For the delights of pure, unselfish love are its own exceeding great reward, greater than human imagination can conceive. As saith the Apostle, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Or, as God's later and more highly illumined servant, who was favored with an experimental knowledge of the joys which the pure in heart experience in the other world, says:—

> "I perceived that this joy and delight came, as it were, from the heart, diffusing itself very gently through all the inmost fibers, and thence into the compound fibers, with such an exquisite sense of pleasure as if every fiber were a fountain of joyous perceptions and sensations, compared with which the delight of corporeal pleasures is as the grass and sordid earth to the pure and subtle aura." (A. C. 545.)

Such is the happiness that awaits those whose hearts become so cleansed of their defilements as to reveal, in their purity and unselfishness, somewhat of the character of the Heavenly Father. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

XII.

THE HEAVENLY MARRIAGE.

For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.—MATT. XXII, 30.

Very little is known of the spiritual world to-day by the great majority of even professing Christians. Very little is believed in regard to it. That world is commonly thought of as something unreal, unsubstantial—the land of shadows and dreams. The grave is, with multitudes, the terminus of all that is known and all that is real of human life. The realm beyond seems vague, shadowy, undefined, and undefinable. Hence the funereal gloom that surrounds the portal to the world of spirits. Hence the bitter agony of Christians as they bend over the coffins of their loved ones, as if the dust they gazed on there were all of their departed friends of which they could think, or in whose existence they really believed. Men talk, it is true, of the immortality of the soul and profess to believe in it. But they think of the soul as of the world into which it goes when it leaves the body, as something shadowy and unsubstantial, a subtle vapor, a shapeless breath that floats about, they know not where, awaiting the general judgment day, when a reunion with the cast-off material body is expected.

But it is revealed for all who are able to receive the revelation, that the spiritual world is intensely real; yes, that it is as much more real and substantial than this world as the soul is more real and substantial than the body. It is further revealed that man, as to his spirit, is an inhabitant of the spiritual world even while he lives in this world, although he is all unconscious of the fact. And when he dies, or is released from his material body, he comes into open and manifest association with spirits whose character is similar to his own, the same spirits, indeed, with whom he had been internally associated while living upon earth. The separation of the immortal from the mortal part, or the soul from the body, and its entrance into the spiritual realm and conscious association with spirits like itself, is what is meant by the resurrection. This takes place immediately after death. The man still lives, though invisible to mortal eyes. He is a real man in the human form as before, with a spiritual and substantial body. He has a similar countenance, similar organs of sense, similar voice and manner, yes, and a similar character as before. In a word, he is in all respects the same individual, the same in reality, and the same in appearance on his first entrance into the other world, leaving behind nothing but his material body. So that what we call *death* is no interruption to the life of the individual. The man lives on still, with capacities enlarged and strengthened, with powers of love, and thought, and action vastly increased if he be a good man.

Then the distinction of sex is preserved in the spiritual world. This follows as a logical inference from what has already been said. Angels are not of the neuter gender, as some Christians imagine. They are male and female, as they were when on earth, for they are all from the human race. Those who are of the male gender in this world, continue of the male gender in the other world; and females here continue females there. The distinction of sex is not destroyed by the death of the body, nor are the sexes changed. This is so reasonable that every mind not perverted or bewildered by false teaching readily assents to it. For consider: It is the soul or spirit that is immortal. It is this that survives the dissolution of the body. And it is well known that man and woman differ not more in respect to the body than in respect to the soul or spirit. In a state of order the body is the normal outbirth of the soul. It is the form which the mind or spirit takes on. And everything appertaining to the body is adapted to some propensity, want, or capability of the mind, with which it perfectly corresponds.

Now, while the male of our species has a form similar in general to that of the female, there is yet a marked difference between them in respect to features, voice, gestures, manners, and physical strength. And there is a difference in the mental characteristics of the sexes just as wide and as strongly marked as that which is so noticeable in their physical organization. Not that there is any mental *superiority* of man to woman, or woman to man, properly speaking, but only a mental difference. The one is the complement of the other, absolutely indispensable to the other's integrity or wholeness. They are but parts of the same whole.

When they twain are one flesh, then the man is complete. Hence it is written in Genesis that God created man in His own image, " male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called *their* name Adam," *i. e., man,* which is the meaning of the Hebrew word *Adam.*

There would be, then, as little propriety in speaking of the mental superiority of one sex to the other, as there would be in speaking of the physical superiority of the lungs to the heart, or the heart to the lungs. The truth is, they belong together. They are parts of one and the same whole. They are mutually adapted to each other in their whole constitution. The man is masculine and the woman feminine in mind as well as in body. The masculine mind is intellectual and the feminine mind emotional—pre-eminently so. In other words, man is born into the affection of knowing, understanding, and being wise; and woman is born into the affection of man's wisdom, or into the love of conjoining herself therewith. Thus man is a form of the intellect and woman is a form of affection, or of the love of that intellect. Not that man is without affection or woman without intellect; but when viewed in relation to each other, their minds are thus characterized, intellect being the distinguishing characteristic of the one and affection that of the other. And thus the sexes stand related like will and understanding, or like the heart and the lungs. This mental difference is not the result of education. It is innate and constitutional. It exists from their creation. It is inwrought into the very nature and texture of their minds.

Therefore it is a difference which cannot be at all affected by the dissolution of the body.

And if this difference of mental constitution between man and woman be such that the mind of one is the complement of the other, and necessary to its own wholeness, so necessary that in this world they mutually seek to become conjoined, then we should expect that their union in the other world would be necessary to the completeness of their being, and that they would, therefore, desire and seek conjunction there. For whatever belongs to the nature and constitution of the soul must be as deathless as the soul itself. We should also expect that minds mutually adapted to each other from creation would be united in the spiritual world. And as heaven is superior to earth, as angels are more pure, innocent, and perfect than men, so we should expect the conjugial principle to exist there in all its strength and purity, and the marriage relation in all its perfection.

This is reasonable—is it not? And nothing essentially different from this will satisfy the demands of reason. And precisely this is taught in the doctrines of the New Church. We are taught that there are marriages in heaven; and that those who are spiritually conjoined, *i. e.*, whose *souls* are married in this their earth-life, live together in marriage union there as much more perfect and blissful than in this world as the joys of heaven are more sweet and entrancing than those of earth. But those who are not spiritually united, not adapted to each other from creation, however they may have been married here below agreeable to the forms of earth, cannot be conjoined in heaven.

But this, some will say, is contrary to the express teaching of Scripture, which declares that "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage." And it *is* contrary to the apparent or literal sense of this Scripture. It is contrary to the natural man's understanding of the doctrine here taught. But the letter of the Word often teaches, or appears to the natural man to teach, something very different from what is taught in the spiritual sense. Thus it is said repeatedly that God is angry, jealous, revengeful; that He repents and is furious. But the spiritual sense teaches that the Divine Being is utterly incapable of any such passions or caprice as are often ascribed to Him in the sense of the letter. The literal sense teaches that the wicked will be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone; but the spiritual sense teaches that they will not be cast into any such lake, according to the natural man's understanding of this language. The literal sense teaches that if a hand, a foot, or an eye offend, we should cut it off or pluck it out and cast it from us; but something very different from this is taught in the spiritual sense; and no one can obey this injunction according to the letter, without a palpable violation of what is taught in the spirit.

Thus we may see that the teaching of the spiritual sense of the Word is often very different, yea, quite contrary to what is taught in the letter as understood by the natural man.

But it is evident that the Lord is speaking of spiritual things in the chapter from which our text is taken. (*It is unreasonable to think He ever speaks of any other,* *really.*) Hence He is speaking of spiritual, not of natural marriage. For He commences by telling what *the kingdom of heaven* is like unto. " It is like unto a certain king, that made a marriage for his son." And we are further told in the very first verse that He is here speaking in parables. Now, the kingdom of heaven is a spiritual, not a natural kingdom. It is a kingdom belonging to the mind, a kingdom of eternal truth and love. " For, behold, the kingdom of heaven is within you," saith the Lord. The marriage here spoken of, therefore, is a spiritual marriage; for it is one which may take place within, *i. e.*, in the human mind. It is of *such* a marriage that the Lord is speaking when He says that it cannot take place in the resurrection. What, then, is the nature of that marriage which must take place here on earth, or never? The spirit of the Word tells us.

In the Scripture the Lord is often called Husband and Bridegroom. Thus in Isaiah: " Thy Maker is thy Husband; Jehovah of hosts is His name." And in Matthew: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh," where the coming of the Lord is spoken of. So, too, heaven and the church are often called virgin, wife, and bride. Thus in the Revelation, where the New Jerusalem is described, we read: "Come hither, and I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit upon a mountain great and high, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." And the conjunction of the church, or of man, with the Lord, is called a marriage. Thus in the Revelation it is written: "For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His Bride hath prepared herself." "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb." This marriage or conjunction of the Lord with man and of man with the Lord is a spiritual marriage. Where, when, and how does it take place?

In the mind is *where* it takes place. And it consists of the union of truth in the understanding with love in the will. This is the heavenly marriage; and all pure and heavenly delights, all joyous and innocent feelings, are its legitimate offspring. Just in the degree that this marriage takes place in any mind, the kingdom of heaven comes to that mind. This heavenly marriage descends into human minds from the divine marriage of love and wisdom in the Lord. In Him love and wisdom are perfectly united, like the heat and light of the sun. And they proceed from Him as one. And they would be received by man as one if his mind were in a state of true order. This was the case with the people of the most ancient church. They received love and wisdom from the Lord in marriage union. In other words, their will, being in union with the Divine Will, they loved what the Lord loves, and loved to do as His truth requires. So that, with them, there was no disagreement, but a perfect marriage union between the will and the understanding as between the heart and lungs. The same is true of the celestial angels. Good and truth are received by them as one. Their wills being in harmony with the Divine Will, they yield themselves, as it were, spontaneously to the requirements of truth. Their life is love—love to the Lord and the neighbor; therefore they act according to the laws of love, which are truths.

But when man fell from his primitive state of innocence, the marriage covenant between him and his Maker was broken. He became spiritually alienated or disjoined from God. His will came into a state of painful separation from, and utter discord with, the Divine Will, with which it was originally in conjunction and harmony. So that man now, in his unregenerate state, loves to do only his own will, which is contrary to the will of the Lord. This is a state of spiritual disorder, yea, of spiritual death. And, with a view to man's salvation from this disorderly and infernal state, the Lord has mercifully provided that he should receive truth separate from good, and be thereby led to good through the path of obedience. For, unless the natural man were able to do this, he could not be saved from the evils of hell. It is of infinite mercy, therefore, that we are able, in our unregenerate state, to understand and acknowledge truth. But in this state we do not love to do as the truth requires, because our wills are supremely selfish, utterly opposed to the will of the Lord. For example, the truth, which we are able to understand in our unregenerate state, teaches us to love, pray for, bless, and do good to our enemies. But the love in our wills is not at all in agreement with this truth; for we are naturally inclined to hate, curse, malign, and injure our enemies. Therefore, in this state, there is no union, but complete opposition, between the will and the understanding. The evils in the one are utterly opposed to the truth in the other. The will and understanding are divorced—are at odds with each other. And the unceasing effort of the Lord is, to reconcile them—bring them at one;—to cause truth in the understanding to be married to love in the will, or faith to be wedded to charity. For He is in the constant effort to bring all men into heaven, or the heavenly state; and all that there is of heaven in man is derived from the marriage of good and truth. This marriage in the mind is the very thing that makes heaven and its delights. And this marriage takes place in every soul, just in the degree that we shun evils as sins against God. Every inclination which is contrary to the Divine truth is contrary to the will of God, and therefore evil. And as often as we discover in our hearts any such inclination, if we regard its indulgence as sinful, and shun it because of its sinfulness, and humbly look to the Lord for His Divine aid, feeling that without Him we can do nothing in the work of overcoming our evils, the evil inclination will at length be removed, and an opposite inclination, one that is approved by the truth and in perfect conjunction with it, will be given us instead.

In this, and in no other way, does the heavenly marriage, which is the conjunction of good and truth, take place in our minds. And the things of heaven are multiplied and increased within us just in proportion as this marriage progresses. And this marriage progresses, *i. e.*, becomes more and more perfect, according as we regard and shun as a sin against God all such feelings, dispositions, and practices as are contrary to known truth or condemned by the laws of heavenly charity. Thus it is that our minds are brought into agreement with the Divine Mind, and we are spiritually conjoined or married to Him, who is declared to be the Husband of the church. Truth in the understanding causes the Lord's presence; but love in the will can alone effect conjunction with Him; and love comes only through obedience to the truth. Hence He says: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love."

We thus see *what* is the heavenly marriage—a union of love in the will with truth in the understanding; and *where* it takes place—in the natural degree of the mind; and *how* it is effected—by shunning as sins against God whatever the truth in our understanding condemns. *When* does this marriage occur? is the next question.

And the answer to it is, during man's abode upon earth, *i. e.*, if he lives here long enough to have the natural plane of his mind developed and formed. (H. H. 345.) The heavenly doctrines teach that all the truths which we understand, but do not religiously apply to life during our abode upon earth, all that are not conjoined to good in the will after the manner already described, are taken away from us when we enter the spiritual world, and we are left as though we had never known them. Agreeable to this gospel, "Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." The truths which we know or believe must be religiously obeyed; and thus, through obedience, become married to their appropriate goods in the will. Otherwise they obtain no living and permanent existence within us. They have no vital hold on us, nor we on them, unless they are rooted in our affections, engrafted upon our hearts. There is no repentance in the spiritual world. The life which we carry with us to that world will remain with us through endless ages. If that life be infernal, it can never be changed to heavenly life. If we carry there the loves of self and the world as our supreme or ruling loves, these loves will remain eternally ours. They cannot be uprooted or removed from our hearts in the other world, nor the opposite loves of heaven be given us in their stead. If our wills and understandings are not united here, if the truths we here know are not made ours by being reduced to practice, if our evils are not resisted and overcome, and our wills here brought into harmony with the revealed laws of heaven, then all this will remain undone to eternity. In short, if the heavenly marriage between the Lord and our own souls, or between His truth in our understandings and His love in our hearts, does not take place on this side the grave, it will never take place on the other side. "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven."

"As the angels in heaven." And how are they? Or what is their state? They love the Lord supremely, and their neighbor as themselves. They do good and communicate, hoping for nothing again. They delight in the law of the Lord, for this law throughout is in perfect harmony with their pure and unselfish love.

Thus there is, in their minds, a perfect marriage of truth and love; and they all are in blissful marriage union with the Lord; and, together with His humble followers here below, constitute "the Bride, the Lamb's wife."

It is a truth of vast moment and of deep solemnity that we are all, during our brief sojourn here on earth, laying the foundations of our eternal life. Here or nowhere—now or never—must the marriage union between the Lord and our immortal souls be effected. The Divine Master is evermore calling and saying: "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage." Are we careful to heed His gracious invitation? Or do we make light of it and turn away, one to his farm, another to his merchandise? As often as we disobey any known law of heavenly life, we turn away from that celestial marriage to which we are invited, and thus render ourselves unworthy to taste of the supper of the Lamb.

O, how thoughtlessly, yet how surely, do men shut the gates of life against themselves! Yea, with their own hands shove the brazen bolts that bar them from the kingdom of heaven! And if any of us expect to enter heaven by merely knowing the truth without doing it, we shall find ourselves at last among the number of those foolish virgins who took their lamps but took no oil with them. The door of the kingdom will be shut against us. For it is open only to those who have provided oil with their lamps; only to those who have become spiritually conjoined to the Lord by a life according to His precepts. And however any may hope to be admitted on account of the truths they have believed or the pious words they have spoken, however they may cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," they can receive in answer to their cry no other than this: "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not."

XIII.

OUR HOMES.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.—JOHN XII, 3.

It was at the little town of Bethany, which means "the house of song," or "the house of the Lord's grace," that this occurred. Jesus was invited to a supper that had been prepared for Him; and among those present on the occasion were Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. How natural it was that the hearts of the sisters should overflow with love and gratitude to Him who had so lately called their brother from the cold embrace of death, and breathed once more into his corporeal form the breath of life. On this occasion Martha served; and Mary, to express the deep and tender emotion with which her soul throbbed, took a pound of very costly ointment and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. The act was one which symbolized her profound gratitude and ardent love. This is plain from a passage in Luke's gospel, where, we are told, a woman who was a sinner came to Jesus as he sat at meat in a certain Pharisee's house, and "brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet and anointed them with ointment." And when the Pharisee who had bidden Him saw this, he thought within himself that Jesus could be no true prophet, else He would know the character of this woman. And the Divine Saviour, reading his thoughts, as He reads yours and mine and all men's, "turned to the woman and said unto Simon: Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house. Thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. . . . And He said to the woman, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

To wash another's feet was an act of hospitality among the Jews, and was significant of charity or neighborly love. Hence the Lord, after He had washed the disciples' feet on one occasion, said: "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet." Whatever we do to one another, the Lord regards as done to Himself. For, referring to certain deeds of charity, such as clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and imprisoned, extending hospitality to the stranger, He says: "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." And to those who have neglected to do this, He says: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

How interesting and momentous is this truth! When will Christians generally come to realize its full and solemn import? When will it come to be an ever present thought with each one that whatever feelings and dispositions we cherish toward one another, we really cherish toward the Lord Himself? that in doing to those around us such spiritual acts and uses as correspond to giving food and drink and clothing and shelter to those who need them, we are doing them to the Lord? and that if we fail to do them to our neighbor, we fail to do them to Him? When shall we realize the solemn truth that in hating our neighbor, we really hate the Lord? in dealing fraudulently with our neighbor, we deal fraudulently with the Lord? in despising our neighbor, we despise the Lord? in cheating, maligning, robbing, and oppressing our neighbor,—yea, the *least* among these, our brethren,—we are crucifying the Lord Jesus afresh, crucifying Him in our hearts?

How we feel and act, then, toward our neighbors, the persons with whom we are brought into daily or frequent intercourse, what our cherished desire and purpose are in regard to them as individuals, as well as in regard to the community, the State, and the Church, that is the sure index of the manner in which we, in our hearts, are feeling, purposing, and acting toward the Lord. It is not possible to love the Lord and bear ill-will toward our neighbor at the same time. For, says the beloved Apostle, "He who loveth God, loveth his brother also." And again he says with increased emphasis: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" How can he, indeed? Therefore the second commandment, which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves, is declared to be like unto the first, which requires us to love the Lord supremely. These commands are said to be alike because each involves the other. They are so intimately connected that it is impossible to obey one without obeying the other also.

We wash the Lord's feet, that is, we extend to Him a kindly hospitality, we welcome Him to our hearts, when we wash each other's feet. And we wash each other's feet in the spiritual sense, when we assist each other in the work of spiritual purification, that is, help each other in applying truth to life. And we do this most effectually by living the truth ourselves, letting it shine forth in our words and works. And when we act toward each other from disinterested love, in the hearty acknowledgment of the Lord's abounding love toward us in imparting unto us something of His own spirit, or quickening within us the life of charity (*signified by the raising of Lazarus*), when love of others prompts our actions, moulds our manners, inspires our words and even thoughts, softens and sweetens the very tones of our voice, making us kind and gentle in all our ways, then we are really doing that which was so beautifully symbolized by the sister of Lazarus when she took the pound of very costly ointment and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. We are pouring upon those around us the precious oil of love, and this the Lord regards as an act of grateful service to Himself, yea, as anointing His own feet with the costly spikenard and wiping them with our hair. And the sphere that encompasses our spirits when we are thus actuated by neighborly love is a sphere of sweet affection as perceptible to the angels of heaven, and as fragrant, as the breath of new-blown flowers. For we read in the Heavenly Doctrines:—

> "In the other life the character of every one is known at his first approach, whether he opens his lips to speak or not; from which circumstance it is obvious that the interiors of man have a certain unknown activity, by which the character of a spirit is perceivable. That this is the case is evident from this consideration, that the sphere of such activity not only extends itself to a distance, but is also at particular times, when the Lord permits, made manifest to the senses by various methods." (A. C. 1504.)

Sometimes spheres are "rendered sensible by odors, which spirits have a more exquisite perception of than men; for odors correspond with spheres." (Ib. 1514.) "When the spheres of charity and faith are perceived as odors, they are most delightful; the odors are sweet and pleasant, like those of flowers, lilies, and spices of divers kinds." But "where men have lived in violent hatred, revenge, and cruelty, their sphere, when changed into odors, has the stench of a putrid carcass." (Ib. 1514–19.)

Sometimes we meet with persons here on earth of such a saintly character, with hearts so full of neighborly love, that, even to our dull perceptions, they seem to bear about them a sweet perfume, a fragrant and heavenly aroma. Love seems their very breath of life, and in every word and look and act there is a kind of delicious odor. Filled with the sweet spirit of the Master, and ardently devoted to His service, they are at all times anointing His feet with the costly spikenard. And wherever they go and in whatever place they abide, the house is filled with the odor of the ointment.

Yes, souls have their odor as well as bodies; but this can only be perceived by souls. And the particular quality of the odor of every soul depends upon the nature and quality of the soul itself; that is, upon the nature of the ruling love. The odor is the spiritual sphere determined by the quality of the inner life: fetid and offensive to the perception of angels if the life be evil; fragrant and delightful if the life be good.

And where more than elsewhere is the character of each one formed? Where, more than in all other places, does the soul grow, either into a goodly cedar or olive, or into a poisonous upas or pestiferous bramble? *At home,* undoubtedly. There, chiefly, is where we shape our eternal course; there is where our selfishness is daily repressed, or daily increasing in strength; there is the soil in which we are growing and ripening for our eternal homes—in the shining courts above or in the dark realms below; there is the moral atmosphere which we and our children breathe constantly.

We all deem it important to bodily health that our houses be well-ventilated, and that the natural atmosphere which we breathe most of the time be pure and sweet. Is it less important to the soul's health that the moral atmosphere of our homes be pure? For, whatever be the character of that atmosphere—pure or foul, healthful or sickening, life-giving or life-destroying—the soul is breathing it day by day.

Then, there is no place like home to reveal one's character to himself. How many people go masked when they go abroad! They wear a disguise more or less impenetrable; they hide their real characters from general observation; they keep out of sight as much as possible their pride and arrogance and fretfulness and self-conceit and lust of dominion and other selfish and unlovely traits. They put on agreeable manners, say pleasant words, do pleasant things, and thus appear to be very agreeable people. But at home the disguise is laid aside. There the true character reveals itself; there thoughts and feelings, restrained elsewhere, are usually allowed free utterance; there selfishness and fault-finding, peevishness and impatience, repining, conceit, and lust of dominion, come forth into free and active exercise, if not restrained by religious principle; there bitterness of heart finds expression in bitter words. Ah! what a blessed thing it is for us that there is some place where we feel that we can act in perfect freedom! For by thus acting our true characters become revealed to ourselves, as well as to others.

And not only may we learn our true characters at home, but there is the place of all others to improve our characters; there is the field in which to win the noblest of victories; there is the place to overcome our selfishness by the frequent and constant exercise of self-denial; there is the place to curb our impatience, to suppress repining, to resist and subdue all the evil tendencies of our nature, and to develop and strengthen the graces of heaven. And as it is by daily food and exercise that our bodies are strengthened and invigorated, so it is through the faithful performance of all our little, every-day home duties that our souls become invigorated and more and more imbued with the life of heaven.

Yes; our *home* duties. These are *first* in the order of importance, yet they are almost the last that many persons think of faithfully attending to. Many a man is careless about his home duties who is quite careful to perform well his official duties, his shop duties, or his counting-house duties. Many a woman performs her duties as neighbor, friend, or member of some benevolent association better than she performs the far more sacred duties of wife and mother; is more thoughtful about the former than the latter, and more anxious to do them well. Many a young man who is quite punctilious abroad, scrupulous away from home to observe all the rules of polite society, often forgets these rules when at home, and will sometimes treat his own sisters with neglect and even rudeness. And many a young woman will often treat her brothers or sisters at home in a way that she would be ashamed to treat young gentlemen or ladies out of the family.

Now, this is all wrong, utterly so, if we would use our homes on earth as a means of preparation for better homes in the world beyond. The husband's duties are not half done when he has furnished the wife with all needful bodily comforts; and the wife's duties are not half done when the husband's meals are carefully prepared and his linen well looked after. Nor are the mother's duties half performed when the children's bodies are well-fed and clothed; nor the father's when the butcher's and the mantuamaker's bills are settled. A *home*, to be worthy of that sweet name, should be something more than an eating and a lodging-house. It should be a place where angels delight to come and nestle; a place warm and fragrant with the breath of love; a place for the cultivation of all the gentle, noble, and Christian graces. And we may make it such if we will. But the gentle and Christian graces can only grow by being exercised. We grow to be more and more kind by practising the laws of kindness; more patient by the exercise of patience; more forbearing by the exercise of forbearance; more polite by practising the rules of politeness. And where have we so good an opportunity to put in practice these graces, and thus to promote their growth, as *at home?* There we have an opportunity to exercise them daily; and the feelings and dispositions which we daily exercise cannot fail to increase in strength.

Let it be the study, then, of every member of a family to make his home, as far at least as in him lies, what God designed that every home should be—a little heaven on earth. Let him feel that there is the place above all others where he is called upon every day to give expression to all that is wisest and noblest and best within him ; to repress the selfish and evil tendencies of his nature by denying them the indulgence they crave, and to put in practice the rules of politeness and the laws of Christian charity. No man that has learned to be polite at home will ever be rude or vulgar abroad. No one who habitually practises the law of kindness at home will transgress against that law abroad. No one who studiously refrains from idle gossip, uncharitable judgments, and coarse backbitings at home, will ever be likely to fall into such practices abroad. No one who cherishes an habitual regard for the feelings of husband, brother, sister, wife, will ever needlessly wound the feelings of others. No one who uniformly makes God's law his rule of action and standard of right at home, will be likely to trample on that law abroad.

Our home duties are most of them very little duties, and for that reason they are more in danger of being overlooked and neglected. They are little, indeed, when viewed separately, but great in the aggregate. And is not the universe itself made up of little things? And our lives of little acts, as they are of little moments? "The happiness of life," says an eminent writer, "does not depend on the half dozen memorable enjoyments that make certain years and days stand out in the annals of our past, like the green and palmy islands of the desert to the traveler, but upon the small and unconsidered blessings that come fresh and fresh every hour and every moment." So, too, does a truly intelligent idea of God's munificence "come less from the consideration of mighty phenomena that happen rarely, and rather as exceptions, than from the daily observation of that quiet and pretty ripple of life through the tiny and tender forms of bee and butterfly, flower, fern, and feathered moss, which imparts a kind of immortality to the scenery amid which we tread." A flower is a little thing; yet it may, when plucked and proffered by the hand of affection, sometimes flood the heart with an indescribable joy. A word is a very little thing; yet many a time has it filled the soul with sudden rapture or bowed it down in sorrow.

Yes, the universe is made up of little things, God's measureless bounty of little gifts, life's happiness of little blessings, and life itself of little duties. And foremost among them all, whether viewed in relation to their effect upon ourselves or others, are to be reckoned our little home duties, the many

> "Little nameless acts of kindness and of love"

which, as members of the home circle, we have it in our power, and are therefore called upon, to perform. Let each member of the family, then, strive to perform his share of these duties faithfully and well. Let him remember that his home is, of all other places, the spot where his soul is to grow and blossom and ripen for the skies. Let him bring fresh flowers to it every day, the flowers that ever spring and bloom in faithful, loving hearts. Let him study to make its odor as fragrant, its atmosphere as healthful, and its waters as pure as possible, to make it bright and joyous and improving and happy, an image of the home of angels.

And if all the members of the home circle will do this from religious principle, or from regard to Him who counsels us to love one another, and who has given us His own unselfish love for our example and guide, they will every day be anointing the Master's feet with the precious spikenard, and the house will be filled more and more with the odor of the ointment.

XIV.

CAIN AND ABEL.

Am I my brother's keeper?—GEN. IV, 9.

You remember the sacred allegory of which these words form a part. They are Cain's answer, after he had taken the life of his brother Abel, to the Divine inquiry, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" And how well do they express the coldness, indifference, and unconcern for others' welfare which is felt by all who are under the dominion of faith alone. By *Cain* is meant such faith, and by *Abel* is meant charity.

Faith alone means truth in the understanding without love or charity in the will; truth procured from selfish motives and used to promote selfish ends. A man with a capacious and powerful intellect, garnering up in that intellect rich stores of knowledge, and even of spiritual truth, yet using them selfishly for the advancement of his own glory, without any acknowledgment of Him from whom all truth proceeds, nor any thought of his own personal obligation,—such a man is traveling directly away from, not toward, the kingdom of heaven. He is laying up for himself treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and thieves break through and steal. Whatever may be the appearance to men, to Him who seeth in secret that man's heart is steadily becoming harder and colder; all interest in or care for the neighbor is gradually dying out in his soul; he is actually committing the very deed represented in the sacred allegory by Cain's murdering his brother Abel—for he is destroying in himself the life of charity.

And when charity or love of the neighbor is dead within us we feel no concern for others' welfare, no compassion for them in their misfortunes, no sympathy with them in their sufferings and wrongs, no disposition to extend to them a helping hand. Whatever be the language of our lips, the language of our hearts is, What care I for others' welfare? What concern of mine are their sufferings or sorrows? Suppose they be unfortunate, poor, ignorant, weak, depraved, downtrodden, what do I care? Is it any business of mine to study the interests or seek the welfare of others? Have I not enough to do to look out for myself? "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Such is the language of faith alone; yea, the language of every heart that has not been touched by the spirit of the Divine Master and softened to something of the temper of heaven through the melting influence of heaven's own love. It may not be expressed in words; it seldom is. But this is the *feeling* of every soul wherein charity or neighborly love is dead and selfishness reigns supreme. It is, therefore, the real, though it may be the unspoken, language of every such soul. From out the depths of every supremely selfish heart; from out the dismal abodes of all who have known but have not reverently obeyed the truth, there cometh ever the same heartless answer to the Divine inquiry about a neighbor's condition or a brother's needs: "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?"

And in the degree that we feel indifferent to the wants and woes, the welfare and happiness, of those around us; in the degree that we are able to look with unconcern upon the ignorance, degradation, wickedness, sorrows, and sufferings of others, and feel no inward longing to do something for their relief, we may be sure that in like degree we are internally removed from association with angels and are in fellowship with devils. We are not animated by the spirit of the Master; we have not within us the life of heaven; and if we are content to remain in this state of indifference to the welfare and wants of those around us, we shall make no progress toward the Promised Land. Our faces are not even turned in that direction.

"What care I for others' welfare?" says faith alone. It is my business to look out for number one. "Am I my brother's keeper?" So says every unregenerate man. And as he indulges his selfishness and his indifference to the wants and woes of others, his sympathies grow more and more contracted; the avenues through which the angels draw nigh to him are closed; his inner ear becomes more and more deaf to the soft whispers of the celestial visitants; the life-currents of his soul are frozen up.

But how different is the language of every heart in which the Lord has taken up His abode! For the Divine Love is like the beams of the unwearied sun. It is perpetually going forth; perpetually seeking to impart its own delights unto others; perpetually striving to renew the face of the moral universe, to quicken, save, and bless. And all whose hearts have become the abode of this love are renewed after its likeness. They are animated by the spirit of their Divine Master. They do not *wait* for opportunities to do good, but they *seek* them. They do not merely confer a blessing on those who thrust themselves before their notice, but they *search out* those whom they can enlighten, cheer, save, and bless. Their neighborly love is perpetually watching for occasions on which to exercise itself, and rejoices when it finds them. It goes down to the fallen and yearns to lift them up. It pursues the erring with ceaseless desire and efforts to reclaim them. It searches after the weak, the neglected, the friendless ones of earth that it may bestow on them a blessing. Meditating plans of usefulness, devising ways and means of improving and blessing those around us, going after the erring, seeking to save the lost—this is the work of disinterested neighborly love. This is what the Lord is continually doing; this is what the angels, who are images and likenesses of Himself, delight in; this is what those on earth whose hearts have become the abode of His spirit will feel impelled to do.

And if we are *not* so impelled, if we are inwardly saying with cold indifference, "Am I my brother's keeper?" then we have not the spirit of the Lord and are not of His family and household. We are not internally associated with the angels. Our ends are not the same as theirs. On the contrary, we are in fellowship with the spirits denoted by Cain; spirits who have destroyed in themselves the life of charity; spirits who have slain the brother Abel in their hearts, and have, therefore, lost all human sympathy, all sense of brotherhood with the race.

And we can grow into the Lord's likeness, or into a state of conjunction with Him and fellowship with the angels, only by reverently looking to Him and cherishing high and heavenly aims; only by turning away from the thought of our own selfish ease, our own pleasure, our own profit, our own advancement, and compelling ourselves in the first instance to think of others, and of what we can do to improve and bless them.

And as it is with an individual, so is it with a society or larger man. A society may receive and acknowledge much truth, high and heavenly truth, yea, the very truth of the New Jerusalem, which everywhere exalts charity above faith; yet if it settles down in a state of ignoble ease; if it folds its hands in cold indifference to the physical, moral, and spiritual wants of those around it; if it looks inward upon itself and habitually studies its own ease, its own quietness, its own welfare, its own aggrandizement, careless of the wants and welfare of others, then, whatever doctrine such society may profess, it is really, because practically, in the doctrine of faith alone. It is in fellowship with the spirits denoted by Cain. It may point to its rational and heaven-descended creed, and say: "Look here, see what beautiful truths we have; surely we are all right; surely we are the true church, for we have the very truth of heaven." And yet, through its indifference to the wants and the welfare of others; by its coldness and inaction, and its neglect to busy itself in the performance of the legitimate uses of a church, it has destroyed, or is all the time destroying, in itself the life of charity. It may have truth in the understanding, indeed, but it lacks the paraclete; it has not the spirit of truth; it knows not and cares not for the life of heaven; its spirit is the spirit of Cain; with a careless indifference about the life of charity, symbolized by *Abel* in the sacred allegory, it says in actions, if not in words, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

But in the degree that the spirit of the Lord dwells in any society or church in larger form, that society will be busy in seeking to promote the ends of the Lord, which are especially the salvation of souls. It will let its light so shine before men that they cannot fail to see its good works nor to acknowledge the Heavenly Father's love in them. It will be like a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid. It will think more of imparting than of receiving; more of doing good to others than of getting good from them; more of blessing than of being itself blessed. It will be, like its Divine Master Himself, ever searching for opportunities of usefulness, ever seeking to save the lost. It will go down into lowly places, yea, to the lowliest children of want and sorrow, and deliver to them some heavenly message. It will seek out the unfortunate, the friendless, and neglected, and endeavor to throw around them the shield of its protection, and bring them within the shelter of its love. It will be continually active in imparting to others the peace and joy, the light and life, itself has received from the Lord. To this end, therefore, it should be organized for efficient and useful work. It should have its book and tract-distributing committee; its weekly inquiring and sewing circle for benevolent purposes; its committee for visiting the sick and indigent; its committee on economic questions and needed social reforms; its committee for searching out poor and neglected children, providing them with decent clothing, and drawing them, if possible, into the Sunday school; its committee on amusements, particularly for the young. Thus in some active, benevolent work should every man and woman in a society be engaged. If true neighborly love be there, if the spirit of the Lord be there (and where His spirit is wanting, there can be no true church), the society, like the individual, will feel that it is, indeed, its brother's keeper; that the temporal and eternal welfare of those whom it can reach is to some extent within its keeping; that it is measurably responsible for all the ignorance, degradation, sin, and wretchedness around it, which it makes no systematic effort to alleviate.

And not the recipients alone of a society's beneficent ministrations—no, not the recipients alone—are blessed. The society itself receives a higher and richer blessing than it bestows. God's grace descends upon it and into it just in proportion to the earnestness with which it addresses itself to its legitimate God-appointed duties, to the work, that is, of enlightening, healing, helping, and saving others. By going out of itself, and striving to enlighten and lift up others, it receives continually new life and strength from on high. It grows to be more like a heavenly society, comes into closer and closer communion with heaven by earnestly engaging in such works as the angels delight in. Its sympathies are enlarged; its appreciation of heavenly things is exalted; its religious sensibilities are quickened; its delight in useful works becomes deeper and richer; its faith is strengthened and its love increased.

Individually and collectively, then, we are, or were meant to be, our brother's keeper. For we were created to be mediums of God's blessings to those around us; created to watch over, care for, enlighten, strengthen, and encourage one another, and so to keep each other from falling under the dominion of evil; keep each other in the way of life. And everyone recognizes this as his obligation, so far as the principle of genuine charity is alive and active within him. It is only when the life of charity is extinguished, when Abel has been slain, that the principle of faith alone says, or prompts us to say, with heartless indifference, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

XV.

RELIGION IN BUSINESS.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.—MATT. VI, 33.

What are "all these things" here referred to? Mere earthly treasures; the things which minister to bodily wants and comfort; the things after which the Gentiles seek; all the things which are meant by natural wealth. The Lord does not forbid His disciples seeking these things, but only forbids their exalting them to the rank of things to be supremely desired; of things to be loved and sought after as of the first importance. This is plain from the context, as well as from the first clause of the text: "But seek ye *first* the kingdom of God," that is, as the thing of highest moment; *first*, not in the order of time, but in the order of importance, as the thing of supreme value. This clearly implies that other things, the things of this world, may be sought; but only as things of secondary importance. They are to be regarded not as an *end*, but as means to an end, and should, therefore, occupy a subordinate place in our minds. They are to be looked upon only as a means of serving the Master, not as a master to be served. When a person loves the world supremely, and regards its perishable wealth as the chief good, he will endeavor to make everything else subservient to his worldly prosperity. He will, whenever it seems to him necessary, sacrifice truth, honor, justice, sincerity, every principle of heavenly life, for the sake of that which he prizes above all else. Mammon being the object of his supreme regard, how can he truly worship God? The sincere homage of the heart can be given only to one thing, or one Being. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

It appears from some of the verses preceding the text as if we were forbidden to think at all about mere worldly affairs; as in that which says: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." But this rendering does not do justice to the original. The meaning, according to the more correct rendering is: Be not *anxious* or *troubled* about the things which the body needs. Why should we? Can we not trust to the providential care of Him who furnishes the fowls of the air with their food, although they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns? Besides, it is impossible to provide suitable food and clothing and shelter for our bodies without bestowing some thought on these things; and to neglect all care or provision for our material wants and those of our families would soon make us miserable vagabonds. It would remove us as far from the kingdom of heaven as the veriest savageism is from our most advanced Christian civilization.

The Gospel, then, rightly interpreted, does not require us to be oblivious to the things of this world. It does not forbid our thinking about and making provision for the wants and comforts of the body. It only forbids all anxious solicitude about these things, and a supreme devotion to them as if they were of primary importance. It tells us that there are other things which have upon us, as rational and immortal beings, higher claims than these; that there are other and vastly more important wants—wants of the soul—to be considered; and that we should be careful to give to these latter the consideration which their superior importance demands.

Under the old Christian dispensation, the things of heaven were divorced from the things of the world. There was thought to be an irreconcilable antagonism between them. The highest religious life was thought to be incompatible with a life of active employment in the affairs of this world. Some, therefore, withdrew from the world and immured themselves in cloisters, imagining that there they could live more religiously and worship God more acceptably. And the larger portion of those who remained in the world still thought of religion as a thing wholly separate from our common worldly affairs and daily duties; as a thing of times and places, to be attended to on Sundays, in the sanctuary, and at the prayer meeting, but to be scrupulously laid aside in the shop, the bank, the counting-house, and at our ordinary work on other days of the week.

Now this Old, and with some still prevalent, idea is completely reversed under that New Dispensation of the Gospel which it is our privilege to believe and rejoice in. Christianity, as interpreted in the New revealings, teaches that among the things conjoined by God, but which man has put asunder, are the things of time and those of eternity; the things of earth and those of heaven; the things pertaining to the body and its welfare, and those pertaining to the soul and its welfare.

In nothing, perhaps, is the New Church more broadly distinguished from the Old than in this: That it unites, or aims to unite, religion with our outward and daily life; the spirit and principles of heaven with the common affairs of this lower world. Under the New Dispensation a truly religious life is not a life to be lived apart from the world, but right here in the world. Religion, as we believe and teach it, consists not merely or chiefly in the devout observance of certain forms and ceremonies at particular times and places, such as going to church, listening to sermons, repeating prayers, singing sacred songs, or engaging in other formalities of worship. It is not a thing to be worn in the sanctuary on Sundays and to be laid off in the parlor, kitchen, school-room, and workshop on other days of the week. But it is something to be carried about with us every day, to accompany us everywhere. It is to be carried into business, into politics, into the family, into the school, into the warehouse, the factory, the office, the bank, into pleasures and amusements, and into all the multitudinous duties, relations, and industries of life. Men (according to the new interpretation of Christianity) are to act at all times from religious principle—to trade religiously and manufacture religiously, to work religiously and play religiously, to marry and study and teach and legislate and practise law and medicine and do everything religiously. That is the way they live and act in heaven. And that is the way people will live and act here below when that divine petition, "Thy will be done on the earth as it is done in heaven," shall be fully answered. That is the state toward which the world is slowly approximating. That is the state which all must attain to who really enter the New Jerusalem.

"Trade religiously!" says some one engaged in merchandise. "Buy and sell religiously! How can I do that? My object in trading at all, my sole object, is to make money; and to make as much as I can, and make it in the easiest and quickest way possible. What, then, has religion to do with business, or business with religion?"

If money is your sole object in business, then you are not conducting your business religiously; *that is certain.* Your back is turned upon the Lord and the things of His kingdom, and you are looking toward the opposite kingdom—the kingdom of darkness—though you may not know it. You are not seeking *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And we shall none of us ever find that kingdom unless we seek it, and seek it first. How, then, to seek God's kingdom as a thing of first or supreme concern in our business is the subject for present consideration.

The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom. Its foundations and essence are in the soul. The Lord teaches this when He says: "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you." It is a state of mind in which He is acknowledged as our sovereign and king, as having the exclusive right to rule supreme over all else within us, and when we hold ourselves as His loyal subjects. The laws of our inner and superior life, the laws of heavenly charity revealed in the Divine Word, are the laws of this kingdom. And when these laws are freely accepted and reverently obeyed as the laws of our life, our souls are brought, through such acceptance and obedience, into an orderly, free, and truly human state, into a joyous and happy state akin to that of the angels in heaven. This is the state denoted by "the kingdom of God." It is a state in which the selfish propensities of the natural man have been brought into complete subjection to the divine laws of love and justice, and we experience delight in doing the will of the Heavenly Father so far as that will has been made known to us.

Very different is this from the state of the natural man. It is not the state into which we are born naturally, nor one into which we come through the exercise and development of our natural faculties and propensities. It is, indeed, so different, that one who comes into it is said to be "born again," or "born from above"—"born of God"—and to be "a new creature." Therefore the Lord says: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Those, therefore, and only those, who are anxiously striving after this regenerate state—who propose as the chief end of their existence the subjugation of their selfish and evil loves, and the development and formation of a heavenly character—are seeking "first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Whatever be our natural vocation, we should always have this end in view. To lose sight of this is to lose sight of heaven.

And how are we to seek this end in trade? How carry religion into business? Or how is business to be so prosecuted as to contribute to the supreme end had in view—the upbuilding of God's kingdom in the soul?

1. We should see that our business is a legitimate one. If its prosecution is detrimental to the health, the manners, or the morals of the community it is not legitimate. We cannot innocently embark in a business that tends in any way to the natural or spiritual injury of our neighbor. And if a man finds himself in such a business, he will abandon it for some legitimate one as soon as he thinks seriously of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

2. Having entered upon a legitimate business, how should it be conducted? What should be your chief aim? To realize the largest pecuniary return within a given time? To make the most money you can out of it? If so, you will often set aside the law of neighborly love. You will trample on the eternal principles of justice when these seem to hinder you in the attainment of your grand object. You will have recourse to cunning and concealment and deception and a thousand artifices called "tricks of trade," which, viewed in the clear light of heaven, differ not one atom from downright lies. This is what the unregenerate man does—what all men do who are not seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And so, in

the prosecution of their business, their souls do not grow to be larger, purer, nobler—more just, generous, and humane—but narrower, meaner, more selfish, and unjust. We grow in the direction of the kingdom we seek *first*, that is, with the deepest devotion.

Carry, then, religious principle into your business. Start with the assumption (which, however, is no assumption but an assured verity with those who believe the Gospel) that the interests of eternity are paramount to those of time, and the welfare of the soul more momentous far than that of the body. Be honest, just, sincere, and true in every transaction ; not from policy, but from principle ; not to secure the confidence and esteem of men, but because it is right in the sight of God ; because these virtues are good and praiseworthy in themselves ; because they are essential elements of true humanity and accordant with the will of the Heavenly Father. In buying or selling take no undue advantage of those with whom you deal. Never allow yourself to do to a customer that which you would not be pleased to have done to yourself if you were in that customer's place and he in yours. If you know of any defect in your goods, never think of passing them off on others as though they were perfect, nor without telling what you know of their defects. If you do, you are as dishonest in that transaction as the man who passes counterfeit money for genuine, knowing it at the time to be counterfeit. Because you have been deceived in the goods you have purchased is no reason why you should deceive others. Is a lie told to or practised on you any excuse for your telling or practising a similar lie on others? The law of the land regards (and justly) the passer of counterfeit money, knowingly, as equally guilty with the counterfeiter himself. And so the man who sells goods, the defects of which he knows but deliberately conceals, is no better than the original cheat.

Carry honesty, then, strict and undeviating, into every business transaction; not as the best policy merely, but as a principle without which you can never enter the kingdom of God. Undoubtedly this will subject you sometimes, often, it may be, to worldly loss. But what of that? Isn't it better to suffer such loss than to incur a more tremendous one? to lose the dignity, comeliness, and glory of true humanity, the image of God, and with this the peace, joy, and bliss of heaven? "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

When a conflict arises in your mind, then (as often it may), between your fear of worldly loss and your regard for strict honesty and justice toward your neighbor, remember it is a conflict between heaven and hell; and in every such conflict, if you look to the Lord and earnestly invoke His aid, He will bring you off conqueror, will establish you more firmly in the love of justice and of all that pertains to His blessed kingdom. And after the conflict you will be stronger in the right, more a man, more closely linked with the angels of heaven, nearer the kingdom of God, than you were before. But if you allow your love of the world or fear of worldly loss to triumph over principle, then your perception of the right will be obscured, your love of the right weakened, your soul more closely wedded to the wrong, and plunged, therefore, a little deeper into hell.

3. Strict honesty, too, carried as a religious principle into business, will prevent a man from making promises which it is doubtful about his being able to perform; and from assuming responsibilities which there is not a reasonable prospect of his discharging; and from taking risks which may jeopardize the financial security of his neighbor. By far the larger part of all failures in business and all commercial disasters are the normal results of the excessive greed of gain, or of not carrying into business strict honesty, the law of neighborly love, as a religious principle.

4. Again: To seek first the kingdom of God in business, one must not be careless, dilatory, or neglectful, but prompt, active, diligent, and faithful. Whatever we undertake to do, we should aim to do in the best manner possible; and this is incompatible with dilatoriness or neglect. Activity, promptness, and carefulness in what we do are to be reckoned among the Christian virtues, and therefore to be counted as religious duties.

If, then, our first object, our great and highest aim in business, is, not the accumulation of wealth, but the performance of a use in God's kingdom, the formation of an honest, upright, Christian character, the development and strengthening within us of the love of truth, justice, sincerity, righteousness, all the Christian and heavenly graces, if we are more anxious to do justly than to get gain, more willing to suffer pecuniary loss than to sacrifice principle or violate any of the laws of neighborly love, then we are seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We are every day coming more and more fully into that kingdom, for we are making its laws the laws of our life, yea, weaving them, as it were, into the very fabric of our spiritual being.

This is the way religion is to be carried into business, and business to be made instrumental in building up within us the kingdom of heaven. And when this is our high purpose, the very purpose which the Lord Himself contemplates, and is ever ready with His unspeakable wisdom and love to assist us in achieving, we may give ourselves no anxiety about our outward or financial prosperity. The Lord will take care that all things needful to our temporal welfare be provided.

"Therefore be not anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? . . . for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

XVI.

THE TONGUE.

I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.—Ps. xxxix, 1.

What an instrument is the human tongue! Wonderful in its anatomical structure, and yet more wonderful in its adaptation to human wants; in its power to express the thoughts, feelings, and dispositions of the heart. How grand and multitudinous its capabilities! How exalted and noble the uses to which it may be applied! How mean and despicable the purposes for which it is often employed! It can articulate the language of benediction and praise, or utter words of blasphemy and hatred; it can invoke blessings or curses, the favors of heaven or the maledictions of hell; it can show forth and extol the beauty of the Lord, or it can blaspheme His holy name; it can deliver the messages of heavenly wisdom, or become the vehicle of malignity and falsehood; it can soothe like an angel or sting like an adder; it can inspire to deeds of lofty heroism, self-sacrifice, and disinterested benevolence, or to acts of cruelty, revenge, and devilish malignity; it can awaken in individuals and communities a zeal for whatever is true and just and holy, or it can blast reputations, breed discord and hatred between friends and families, and set whole neighborhoods and towns in a blaze.

Such and so potent an instrument is that little member, the human tongue,—potent for good or for evil, according as it is moved and swayed by the breath of God's love, or controlled by the malignity of the infernal host. It is an instrument whereon may be chanted the sweetest and most inspiring melodies of heaven, or the hoarsest and most harrowing discords of hell.

Only an instrument, however, through which the soul gives audible expression to itself. The tongue is the organ; the soul, the organist that sits behind the screen and plays upon it. The tongue simply does the bidding of its master; acts as it is acted upon; cheers or saddens, heals or wounds, blesses or curses, as the soul determines. In itself considered, it is as destitute of moral quality and as innocent of wrong, as the pistol or dagger wherewith the assassin slays his victim.

Yet the connection between the tongue and the soul is intimate and vital. The instrumental here reacts upon the principal and helps to strengthen and confirm the purpose or state in which the act originates. Words which the tongue utters are ultimates. They are one of the ways whereby the soul finds expression in this ultimate or lowest sphere. And every spiritual principle is strengthened and confirmed by being ultimated. This is a fixed and eternal law. By *doing* evil to our neighbor we strengthen in our hearts the principle of evil—we confirm the hatred in which the evil deed originated. By deeds of injustice and fraud we strengthen within us the spirit of fraud and injustice.

By false and deceitful words we confirm in ourselves the spirit of deceit and falsehood—we make our souls more false and deceitful; by profane words we strengthen the spirit of profanity; by words obscene and vulgar we encourage the spirit of lewdness and vulgarity; by bitter and malicious words we strengthen in our hearts the spirit of hatred and malice. And, on the other hand, by true and honest words we strengthen in our souls the spirit of truth and honesty; by kind words, the spirit of kindness; by gentle, conciliatory, and loving words, the spirit of gentleness, conciliation, and love.

And thus it is that words are a powerful means of educating the soul. They help to confirm it in good or evil, to render it more true, sincere, just, and holy, or more false, hypocritical, unjust, and profane. Hence we may see why the Lord says: "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Therefore the tongue, whereby words are articulated or formed, is an instrument by means of which the soul may be helped or hindered on its heavenward way; may be beautified or marred, purified or defiled, exalted or debased; yea, may be more intimately associated with the angels of heaven, or more closely bound to the devils in hell.

How it becomes each one of us, then, to listen reverently to the words of the Psalmist: "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue."

Perhaps there is no way in which people—professedly Christian people, members of churches—sin so often as with their tongues. The thoughts and feelings of the heart find such easy utterance by the tongue, that, before our regeneration is complete, we need to be perpetually on our guard to keep back the thousand little streams from hell that seek to pour themselves forth through this channel. Let us consider some of the more common ways in which professedly Christian people sin with their tongues.

There are a hundred ways in which those who make no pretensions to religion—who have no regard for the Lord or His Word, or for anything sacred—are perpetually sinning with the tongue. They sin by telling deliberate falsehoods, by taking their Maker's name in vain, by blaspheming the holy things of heaven and the church, by cursing and maligning each other and whoever does not favor them, by telling obscene stories and uttering obscene jests. The language of such shows who their most intimate spiritual associates are. It shows how polluted and profane are their internals; how closely they are linked with the hells; how surely they will consort with devils when they enter the other world, unless they repent and come to shun as a sin against God all false speaking and profane swearing. As to their spirits, such persons are already in hell; the profanity and obscenity of the abyss find expression through their tongues. Strip them of their outer vesture of decay, of their temporary garment of flesh and blood, and view them in the light of heaven, and what are they now but devils? And when we consider how much profanity and coarse vulgarity there is in almost every Christian community, when you hear it at almost every turn from the lips of young men and boys as well as from men of gray hairs—on the street, in the hotel, in the workshop, on board the steam-boat and rail-car, and even in legislative halls,—we may see how fearful yet is the influx of hell into the men of our earth. Yet profanity is only one of the myriad signs of such influx.

But my readers, I trust, have no need to be warned against *this* way of sinning with the tongue. If they sin with it at all, it is in some less gross and palpable, some more refined and unconscious manner. It is of some of the ways in which Christian people often sin with their tongues that I wish now to speak.

1. First, there is much and frequent sinning with the tongue in families. Parents often speak to their children and children to each other, husbands to their wives and wives to their husbands, in a rude, impatient, sour, harsh, often in an irritating, manner. And this manner of speaking tends to confirm the bad state from which such speaking proceeds. Every time it is indulged it strengthens in the speaker some of the feelings and dispositions of hell. It gives the devils a firmer grasp upon his soul, a more solid and secure foundation to stand upon; it links him more closely with the hells; makes him more rude, impatient, sour, and harsh in his temper and feelings. And not only this, but it tends to arouse similar feelings and temper in the minds of those addressed. An impatient and irritating manner of speaking begets impatience and irritation in those spoken to; harsh and sour words beget in others harsh and sour feelings, or arouse them from their state of slumber; unkind words beget un-

kindness; impolite speech begets impoliteness; angry words arouse angry feelings. The following just remarks on RUDENESS, especially to children, I copy from a late weekly paper, as pertinent to my present theme:—

"Scores of times in a day a child is told in a short, authoritative way to do or not to do little things, which, when we ask at the hands of older people, we ask as favors, graciously, and with deference to their choice. 'Would you be so kind as to close that window?' 'May I trouble you for that cricket?' 'If you would be as comfortable in this chair as in that I would like to change places with you.' 'Would it hinder you too long to step to the store for me? I would be much obliged to you if you would.' 'Pray, do not let me crowd you,' etc. In most people's speech to children we find as synonyms for these polite phrases: 'Shut that window down this minute.' 'Bring me that cricket.' 'I want that chair; get up. You can sit in this.' 'I want you to leave off playing, and go right down to the store for me.' 'Don't crowd so. Can't you see that there is not room enough for two people here.' And so on, every day, and many times a day. And not only are the children addressed in this rude way, but the husband addresses the wife and the wife the husband, brothers their sisters and sisters their brothers, in a similar, perhaps in even a coarser and ruder, manner. It becomes the prevailing habit of the family: for manners as well as feelings and dispositions are contagious; and bad manners, and a rude, harsh way of speaking, wherever indulged, are sure to strengthen bad feelings and promote their growth."

And so the many oft-recurring and frequently unconscious sins of the tongue that are committed within the home-circle tend to sour the temper, to harden the feelings, to benumb the finer sensibilities, and to prevent that home from becoming what it might and ought to be, and what God intended it should be—a little heaven on earth. How often do the sins of that little member close up the avenues of heaven to the family, drive the angels all out of the house, and invite there a company of cold, sour, spiteful devils! for when you drive the angels away, the devils are sure to come. Your home cannot be vacant any more than your heart. If its atmosphere be uncongenial to the angels, then the fiends will gather there; the demons of darkness will find in it a congenial dwelling place.

Yet by a wise and loving use of this same little member, the tongue, how the home circle may be enlivened and gladdened and sweetened and hallowed! How it may be made more beautiful and fragrant than a garden of flowers! How, through tender, gentle, and loving words, may heavenly feelings be hourly called into play and strengthened, the fountains of affection be opened more and more, the burdens of life lightened, its sorrows lessened, its joys multiplied, and troops of shining angels be delighted to come and make their abode in that home!

2. Another way in which Christians are very liable to sin with the tongue is in the way of speaking to servants, clerks, operatives, persons in their employ. There are two general ways of speaking to such persons, which are as different as heaven is from hell, as

different as are the motives and feelings from which the manner of speaking proceeds. One is a cold, harsh, imperious, inhuman way; the way in which a man might speak to a dog or a horse or some other brute animal that he owns: the other is the kind, courteous, gentle, sympathetic, human way; a way that indicates humanity in the speaker and a recognition of the common brotherhood of man. The natural man is of a domineering character. He takes delight in lording it over somebody. He is inclined to look down on those in his employ as if they were an inferior order of beings; and to gratify his love of dominion and his contempt for inferiors by commanding them in a sour, rough, imperious manner, as if they had no human feelings which he is bound to respect. And this is what we are all inclined to do so far as we are unregenerate, so far as the Divine Human Spirit of the Lord does not reign and rule in our hearts. And this we should diligently guard against. And the way to guard against it is, first, to recognize our Christian obligations to all men, and especially to that class of whom I am speaking, and then seek to perform them faithfully and religiously.

Those in our employ, especially if they are employed in some humble or menial service, are apt to look upon themselves as our inferiors, even though they may be intellectually and morally our superiors. They feel themselves our inferiors because of their position; for they know that the fashion of the world is to rate people, not according to inward character, but according to external position. But they may be inferior to us in character as well as position. And if so, the chances are that birth, hereditary qualities, opportunity or the want of it, education or the lack of it,—circumstances over which they had no control,—have made all the difference between them and us. How much superior would you have been to your chambermaid, cook, or washerwoman, to the drudge in your kitchen, office, mill, shop, or foundry, how much wiser, gentler, lovelier, or more faithful, honest, and obliging than any one of these, but for the circumstances of your more fortunate birth and education? or of some superior qualities which you *happened* to inherit?

Then, if we are superior to others in endowments or position or both, that is a reason why we should be more kind and courteous toward them than they to ward us, more considerate and forbearing, more patient with their faults and mistakes, more gentle and polite in our manner and language. Christianity requires that the strong bear the infirmities of the weak, the refined and cultivated those of the vulgar, and that the wise be patient with the faults of the ignorant, and those of quick discernment with the dulness of the stupid.

Moreover, if we would act the part of true Christians to those in our employ, however inferior they may be to us in character or position, we shall not consider that we have done our whole duty to them when we have paid them the stipulated wages. By no means. We may thereby have discharged our civil obligation; but there is a higher and holier, even a Christian, obligation which remains uncanceled. This latter obligation is not fully discharged until we have done all we could to enlighten, cheer, encourage, and uplift our dependents and employees, to enlarge and rectify their views, to develop their manhood and womanhood, to refine their taste, to quicken in them the perception of right, to strengthen their love of duty and of moral excellence, and their abhorrence of evil. Only by doing or striving to do this can we discharge toward them our highest—our truly human—obligations. And how large a share of this highest and noblest of all work may the tongue be instrumental in doing! A word of encouragement now and then instead of fault-finding, of sympathy instead of icy coldness, of commendation instead of censure, of kindness and gentleness betraying in you some humane feelings and some just appreciation of the labors and difficulties of their vocation;—this is the truly human, yea, the angelic, work which the tongue that so often sins against those in our employ may be made to do for them. And such a work, done from a sense of religious duty, is sure to bless the employer even more than the employed; for it exalts and ennobles him spiritually, brings him into closer communion with those shining ones in the upper realms, and makes him more and more receptive of the life of God with its ineffable sweetness and joy.

3. There is another way in which Christians are apt to sin with the tongue which is still more common, perhaps, as it certainly is more pernicious. I mean that careless, unthinking use of the tongue in speaking of individuals or families who are not quite congenial to us, or against whom we have imbibed a prejudice; repeating, and perhaps unconsciously coloring and exagger-

ating, unkind, it may be false and unjust, remarks about them; retailing from house to house things prejudicial to others, if not absolutely slanderous. It is impossible to estimate the amount of mischief that is done in this way by many who profess to be Christians, and are members, indeed, of Christian churches. What pain is inflicted upon individuals! What sorrow and anguish produced in families! What lasting hatreds enkindled or confirmed! What alienations among friends! What bitterness and strife in neighborhoods! What disturbance and trouble oftentimes in religious societies! And all this through the ill-regulated or thoughtless and unrestrained use of that little member —the tongue.

I do not mean that the mistakes, follies, offenses, or crimes of people are never to be spoken of. It is the most uncharitable thing we can do sometimes to be silent in regard to them. We may ourselves incur a share in the guilt by holding our tongues respecting the wrongs or misconduct of others. We may help to deceive and mislead and so do an injury to the innocent by concealing from them or neglecting to tell what we know, or what we have learned on good authority, of such wrongs and misconduct. And so we may sometimes sin by not using as well as by misusing the tongue. It is not the speaking of those grave offences which ought not to be concealed or excused, but ought to come abroad and be everywhere spoken against, that I refer to as among the sins of the tongue which I am now considering. It is the parading and magnifying of the trivial faults or foibles of one's neighbors that had far better be overlooked or never spoken of to others.

Your neighbor, or a member, it may be, of the same religious society or congregation as yourself, is not quite congenial with you. He has given you cause, it may be just cause, of offense. He has wounded your self-love, intentionally or unintentionally, and you are not feeling quite friendly toward him. Through the existing feeling in your heart, you are hardly conscious, perhaps, that it is one of dislike or ill-will, as through an open avenue that invites their approach, evil spirits draw nigh to you. You hear something said derogatory to that individual or his family and you are glad. This would not gladden but would rather sadden you, if the angels with their sweet influences were nearer than the evil spirits. These same spirits, whose special delight is in doing mischief, prompt you to go and repeat to others what you have heard; worse than that, prompt you to make the most of it, to color and exaggerate, and to omit the mention of any extenuating circumstances. And these others repeat it again, possibly with still further (though unintentional) omissions, distortions, or exaggerations. And so the story passes from mouth to mouth, with the usual variations and additions; and before it has reached the fiftieth or twentieth person it has grown into a huge falsehood; it has become a gross and cruel calumny. And in this terribly distorted form it finally comes to the ears of the person or family spoken against. Straightway there arises enmity between him and those whose unbridled tongues have been busy in this mischief. The peace of the neighborhood or the harmony of the society is invaded —for the time destroyed; friends are alienated; social ties are sundered; bad feelings are excited; hard words are spoken; violent passions are aroused; bitter hatreds are engendered; the angels are driven away from that neighborhood or society, and grinning, heartless, exultant devils come and hold a carnival there. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" says the Apostle. "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. It setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." When not restrained and regulated by Christian principle "it is an unruly evil full of deadly poison."

And not only does the inconsiderate and unkind way of speaking of our neighbors, upon which I am remarking, do them harm as well as the neighborhood or society, but most of all it harms the speaker himself; it strengthens his prejudice; it confirms him in his hatred; it brings him into closer alliance with devils; it adds fuel to the dreadful fire of hell in his heart.

There are two or three simple rules which we should be careful to observe if we would avoid the sin of which I am speaking.

1. Remembering our own weakness and our hereditary tendencies, the subtlety and power of infernal spirits, and how easy it is to sin with the tongue, and how liable we all are to fall into it, we should look earnestly and often to the Lord in His Divine Humanity, and pray Him to shield us from it, and to save us from the uncharitable and unbrotherly feeling which prompts to its commission.

2. We should ask ourselves, whenever we hear unkind and damaging remarks made about our neighbor, whether it will probably serve any good purpose to repeat them; whether it will be likely to profit him, ourselves, or others, socially, morally, or spiritually; and whether it may not do harm to us and him. If the latter, as is most probable, then our path of duty is plain.

3. If there are within the circle of our acquaintance some who are uncongenial to us, against whom we are prejudiced, or toward whom we entertain anything like a jealous, envious, or unfriendly feeling, or of whom we do not feel like speaking in terms of commendation, then the wise and safe course is to say nothing of them, or as little as possible, lest we sin with our tongues. And if we are glad when we hear evil of them, we may thereby know that our own state is not good; and that if we allow ourselves to repeat what we hear, we shall be likely to color and exaggerate, perhaps without intending it or even being conscious of it.

4. If our relation to the person of whom we may chance to hear something unfavorable—something that casts a stigma upon him or reveals the working of evil within him—be such as to warrant us in going to him personally and telling him what we have heard, or if we have reason to believe that he is truly desirous to see and overcome his evils, then our duty is plain. We should go to him privately, taking special care always to go in the spirit of kindness and true neighborly love. Going thus, bearing in our hearts the kind, gentle,

loving spirit of the Lord, *we* shall not fail to receive a blessing if we do not confer one upon our neighbor.

While we observe or strive to observe these rules, we shall be perpetually taking heed to our ways that we sin not with our tongues.

XVII.

REMAINS—THEIR MEANING AND USE.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth.—JOHN III, 7, 8.

That new birth of the spirit called regeneration is something at which the natural man is ever inclined to marvel; for it is something that he does not understand. It is a mental or spiritual experience through which he has never passed; and what does any individual know, what *can* he know, of mental states save what he learns from experience? When, therefore, that inward spiritual renewal known among Christians as the new birth of the soul is talked of, the natural man wonders, as did Nicodemus, how such a thing can be. "How can a man be born when he is old?"

The Lord teaches us in these few words that regeneration, although a work carried on exclusively within the realms of spirit, is really not more marvelous than some natural operations. The spirit of God, as it moves upon the face of the soul's deep waters, inducing light and order and peace where all before had been darkness, chaos, and tumult, mysterious as it may seem, is really no more so than the movements of that subtle element in which our bodies live and breathe. The viewless mind, like the spirit of the Lord, is felt, not seen, or seen only in its effects. Regeneration cannot be comprehended or seen by the natural mind. But when it is experienced, when the sound of the Spirit moving upon the faces of the abyss within us is heard, then we begin to know what it is from the effects produced, though we may never understand all the innumerable arcana appertaining to it.

Regeneration is indispensable to a man's entrance into the kingdom of heaven. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," is the emphatic language of the Eternal Word. And this new birth consists in a thorough renewal of the heart and life, a complete and radical change in the individual's dominant affections and thoughts, a renovation of his entire moral being; so that, although he remains identically the same as to person, yet as to his spirit, as to the quality of love that rules within him, he is altogether another and a different being. Spiritually viewed, he is a new man, or as Paul says, "a new creation;" for his governing propensities, his predominant dispositions and feelings, his motives of action, his ends and aims of life, are no longer what they were. His ruling affections and thoughts, instead of being supremely selfish and worldly, are such as are born from above, and have supreme regard to the Lord and the neighbor. We know that this is not man's natural state, but quite the reverse of it. For the Bible everywhere represents man as in a fallen and depraved state. All its solemn warnings and injunctions are addressed to him as the heir of a corrupt spiritual inheritance. At the same time it represents him as originally created upright, in the image and likeness of his Maker, loving the Lord with all his heart and his neighbor as himself. But through an abuse of his truly human faculties, liberty and rationality, he fell from his original state of innocence and order into a state quite the opposite. From loving the Lord and the neighbor supremely, he came to love himself and the world above all else. But this moral lapse of the race, this departure from a state of heavenly order, was not sudden, but gradual. It did not occur through the single transgression of a single individual, but through the repeated transgressions of successive generations. One generation abused its human faculties to some extent, and so departed in some measure from a state of divine order. The measure of its corruption was transmitted by inheritance to the next succeeding generation ; and this generation added to its inheritance a fresh accumulation, which it, in turn, transmitted to the next. In this way the disorder went on, increasing in virulence with each successive generation, until at last the contagion had spread itself throughout the whole natural degree of the mind, and the entire man was diseased. As saith the Prophet Isaiah : " The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in him, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." From being an image of his Maker, he came to be an image of the opposite—a form of hell. And when the mind of the race as to its natural degree became thoroughly disordered, the more interior degrees through which man had held intercourse with the angels became closed. This was of the Lord's tender mercy; for otherwise, the higher degrees of the mind would also have been deranged, and thus the whole man would have been ruined. It is thus that Adam (which, in the Hebrew, simply means *man*) was expelled from Paradise and the gates of Eden, the peaceful and lovely Eden of the soul, closed against him.

With this disordered and corrupt nature all men are now born. The moral malady, consisting of the dreadful accumulations of ages, has become the inheritance of the race. How could it be otherwise? For we know that certain physical qualities and corporeal diseases are transmitted from parents to children; and from the known connection between the mind and the body, what more reasonable than the inference that certain mental and moral characteristics are transmitted in like manner? And the most careless observer cannot fail to see that such is actually the case. For who does not know that every nation on the face of the earth has a mental as well as a physical character peculiar to itself, which is transmitted by inheritance through successive generations? The same thing is observable even in families; for it is a well-established fact that the minds of children resemble those of their parents or foregone ancestry not less frequently or less strongly than their faces.

When we speak of hereditary depravity, therefore, we speak according to sound philosophy based upon a large induction from well-established facts. But although a depraved nature has now become the inheritance of the race, men are not, therefore, born *sinners*, as the Old theology teaches. The New Christianity makes a wide distinction between hereditary depravity and sin. By the former are meant those depraved desires and selfish feelings, those corrupt propensities and perverse inclinations, which are ever urging men to act contrary to the laws of God. But no one is to be accounted a sinner for *having* such propensities. Sin is moral guilt; and it is plain enough that such guilt is not incurred by simply inheriting evil inclinations. We might as well call consumption, or any other physical disease transmitted by inheritance, sin. Nor is it sin for a child to *indulge* its evil inclinations before arriving at years of discretion; for sin consists in acting contrary to one's rational understanding of the truth. When the rational faculty is sufficiently developed, and the child begins to take his character into his own hands, then, if he acts contrary to what he knows and acknowledges to be required by the divine commandments, he commits sin. He then appropriates, or adopts as his own, the evil which before was only hereditary. Thus he incurs guilt; and not until guilt is incurred does one's hereditary evil become actual sin.

When we speak of man's being depraved by inheritance, therefore, we mean that he is naturally inclined to evil; that his ruling hereditary love is *selfish*, and not such as prompts him to love the neighbor as himself. And since it is not the outward appearance but the inward quality of actions, the *motive* from which they are performed, that stamps them as good or bad, therefore no actions are really good except such as are prompted by a good motive—by a love that has regard to the Lord and the neighbor; for all human goodness has its origin in this love. And as all evil has its origin in the opposite love of self, and as this is our ruling hereditary love, therefore the natural man is full of all kinds of evil, and is said to be a form of hell.

And here arises the question: If man is now born in such a state of inverted order, with inclinations impelling him in a path the opposite of that which leads to heaven, how can he be brought back into a state of order? If his ruling hereditary loves are such as incline him only to evil, how is it possible that he can ever desire or follow after that which is good? How can he ever be regenerated? How can his innate downward proclivity be arrested, or what is to give his thoughts and feelings a direction heavenward? What ground has he to start from in his upward course? This is a question which has greatly puzzled theologians and produced much controversy and many divisions among Christians, but which, like all kindred questions, the New Christianity answers with clearness and precision. The solution of the whole difficulty is presented in the doctrine of the New Jerusalem concerning *Remains.*

The subject of Remains is one of exceeding interest and importance. As a practical question, there is no one, perhaps, which at this time has stronger claims upon the attention of Christians than this. The subject is but little understood generally—scarcely known by this title outside of the New Church; yet it is one of so much importance that all men have had some general idea concerning it, which they have received by common influx. There are also several passages of Scripture which treat of it, and whose meaning, even in the literal sense, is too obvious to be mistaken.

Almost every one knows something of the tender susceptibilities of infancy and childhood. He knows how soft and plastic the mind of a little child is, how easily it receives impressions, and how deep and enduring those impressions usually are. Almost every one can call to mind instances of persons who, for many years, led thoughtless, wicked lives, but at length were brought to repentance and became good, religious men, who traced the cause of their reformation to the lessons of virtue and piety inculcated in their earliest years.

And who of us that have hung in childhood upon a pious mother's neck, lisped the words of prayer she breathed, and drunk in her lessons of duty and love, have not felt through all our lives the influence of her early teaching? When tempted to violate God's holy laws, when urged by selfishness to do our neighbor wrong, when beset by unholy passions and thronged around by evil spirits, how have that mother's early lessons came up with saving power from out the silent depths of our being and spoken to us as with the tongues of angels! How have we heard her voice, more eloquent in praise of righteousness and of God's pure law than when it fell in floods of music on our natural ears! How have we seen her yearning eye, felt her tender, throbbing heart, and heard her angel whispers plead, "My child, my child, do not that wrong, for 'tis against God and heaven." And when we have turned a deaf ear to the remonstrance, warning, and entreaty of those lessons of duty inculcated in our childhood, when we have practically despised the wisdom and trampled on the instruction of our tender years, how in our lone and silent hours have those early lessons come up against us in solemn and fearful judgment!

Probably we all, at times, have had some such experience as this; for although we may not all have been blessed with pious mothers, yet we have all been blessed with some measure of heavenly love and instruction in our childhood. We have all had soft hearts once, however hard they may be now. And the Lord has mercifully provided that some faint impress of Himself should then be stamped upon them. He has provided—O, with what infinite wisdom and loving kindness!—that some sparks of His own love should be treasured up in our tender years and kept alive within us. Smouldering and well-nigh quenched these sparks may seem sometimes, but they are there, yes, they are there, and guarded forever by Him who never slumbers nor sleeps. They are there and ready to kindle into a flame of heavenly love as soon as we open the windows of the soul and permit the breath of heaven to fall upon them. No heart is so hard that it may not be softened to the temper of heaven, if it will but yield itself to the melting influence of that spark from God which has been stored up within it in early years. No one is suffered to grow to maturity without some small *remnant* of goodness and truth stored up within him by the Lord, and which is sufficient to save him if he will walk according to it. Were it not for this *remnant*, or these *remains* of good and truth, it would not be possible for any man to be saved. As saith the Prophet Isaiah, " Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom and we should have been like unto Gomorrah;" that is, we should have been wholly immersed in hereditary evil and in the falses thence derived, which is to be spiritually destroyed. By *Sodom* is denoted the evil of self-love, and by *Gomorrah* the falsity thence derived. This passage in its specific application had reference similarly to the collective Hebrew Church and to the small remnant of righteous people left in it at the advent of the Lord. But it is also applicable to every individual, for what is true of any church in general is true of each individual in particular.

I have said that the reason why every man, though born with a depraved nature and with strong hereditary propensities to evil, may, nevertheless, be regenerated, is fully explained by the doctrine of the New Church concerning remains.

But what are we to understand by *remains?* We have the answer in the Heavenly Arcana, where it is said:—

> "Remains are all things of innocence, of charity, of mercy, and of the truth of faith, which man from infancy has received from the Lord and has learned; all and each of these things are laid up in store, and, if man should not possess them, it would be impossible for anything of innocence, of charity, and of mercy to be in his thoughts and actions; consequently there could be nothing of good and truth therein, and hence he would be worse than the savage beasts. The like would happen in case he had remains of such things, and yet by filthy lusts and direful persuasions of what is

false should stop up the way against them and prevent their operation." (A. C. 661.)

"Remains are not only the goods and truths which a man has learned from infancy out of the Word of the Lord, and which are thus impressed on his memory, but they are likewise *all states* thence derived; as states of innocence from infancy; states of love toward parents, brothers, teachers, and friends; states of charity toward the neighbor and also of mercy toward the poor and needy; in a word, all states of good and truth. These states, with their goods and truths impressed on the memory, are called remains, which remains are preserved in man by the Lord, and are stored up in his internal man, whilst he is altogether ignorant thereof, and are carefully separated from the things which are proper to man, that is, evils and falses. All these states are so preserved in man by the Lord that there is not the smallest of them lost; as it was given me to know by this that every state of man, from infancy even to extreme old age, not only remains in another life, but also returns, and that exactly such as they were during man's abode in this world; thus not only the goods and truths in the memory, but likewise all states of innocence and charity; and when states of evil and of the false, or of wickedness and fantasy recur, which also, all and each, even to every smallest circumstance, remain and return, then these latter states are tempered of the Lord by the former. Whence it may be evident, that, unless man had some remains, he could not possibly be otherwise than in eternal condemnation." (A. C. 561.)

Thus it is that each one's life-record is unrolled in the other world and everything written therein becomes distinctly legible. Our states, both of good and of evil, there return, and thus all "are judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works."

We are further taught in the doctrines of the New Church that—

"Man cannot live without remains, since it is remains which give him the capacity of receiving life above brutes. From remains, or rather by means of remains from the Lord, man has the capacity to be as man, to know and reflect upon what is good and true, consequently to think and reason; for remains alone are receptive of spiritual and celestial life." (Ib. 560.) "If man had in him no remains, he would not be a man, but much viler than the brute. And the fewer remains he has, the less he is a man; and the more he has, the more he is a man; for remains, like the stars of heaven, emit more or less light in proportion to their magnitude." (Ib. 530.)

Thus we learn how it is that man, though born with a depraved nature, thoroughly defiled with hereditary evil, has nevertheless the capacity of *receiving* germs of goodness and truth from the Lord, which, if permitted to grow and expand, will ultimately form within him a new mind, and thus make him altogether a new man. This new man or mind is said in the Scripture to be *born from above*, because it is formed from those principles of good and truth which descend from Him who is above all, and who, coming down from heaven, evermore giveth life unto the world.

During all our lives the Lord is constantly endeavoring, by methods innumerable, some of them beyond our feeble powers of comprehension, to implant within us the seeds of His own love and wisdom, without which regeneration would be impossible. And those who are careful not to suffocate or destroy the remains that have been stored up within them, are constantly receiving fresh accumulations, agreeable to these words of the Lord: "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." But the remains which are stored up during the period of infancy and early childhood are the most important, because they are the purest and most interior things of innocence and love, and therefore the most powerful. Those stored up at a later period are states of truth rather than of goodness. (A. C. 1906.) But the remains of infancy, which gradually diminish as man advances to adult age, are all the states of innocence, love, and peace, vouchsafed at that period.

The Lord, in the plenitude of His love and wisdom, has mercifully provided that in the infancy of our being our hereditary evils shall be quiescent. He has provided that some of the best of the angels shall then be in communion with us, that they may breathe into our tender and infantile forms the sweetest things of their love. There is not less of truth than of poetry in those beautiful lines of Wordsworth, which declare that God

> " . . . . Did wrap the cloud
> Of infancy around us, that Himself
> Therein, with our simplicity awhile
> Might hold, on earth, communion undisturbed."

And not only has the Lord provided that some of the best of the angels shall have charge of infants, but He has also given to parents a peculiarly tender love for them. He has given an especial love of watching over them and of guarding and doing them good. The love which a mother feels for her infant child—how peculiar it is! How totally different from the love she feels toward any other human being! Even wicked parents are mercifully gifted with this peculiar love of their offspring. Whatever they may do to others, they love to do good to their children. They are loth to have their children imitate their own vices; and while feeling themselves an utter contempt and loathing for the things of religion, and living in the daily violation of God's laws, they will often manifest a strong desire to have their children receive religious instruction, and seem pleased to have them obey it.

Now, this is all of the good providence of the Lord. This love of parents for their children comes down from the Father of mercies, and is bestowed partly that their present physical wants may be provided for, but chiefly as a means of providing for their future spiritual wants, of forming within them suitable receptacles for the seeds of heavenly truth in after years.

And not only do parents, but all who are brought into near and intimate relations with young children, as nurses, guardians, teachers, and friends, feel a peculiar regard for them. Almost every one feels his evils restrained if not rebuked by the sweet smiles of infancy; and his looks, tones, words, and actions are more kind and gentle in the presence of little children. Hard, indeed, must be that man's heart, deplorable, indeed, the state of him who can look without one tender or affectionate feeling upon a smiling infant's face.

Now, all the love which parents, friends, and nurses feel for and exercise toward little children; all the states of love and peace which are thereby induced in them; all the sweet influences of heaven which celestial angels breathe into their susceptible hearts; all the simple truths of religion taught them as they advance toward maturity; all the good affections, and all the kind, tender, and amiable feelings expressed in their presence; all the lessons of sincerity, justice, and love inculcated by parents, teachers, and books,—all these are positive and substantial things which flow into the minds of children in their tender years and are there stored up for future use. Hence they are called Remains or remnants. Not one of them is lost, and they constitute the elements of all that there is of the kingdom of heaven in any of us. They form no part of the natural mind, but are altogether opposed to our hereditary loves, and are the means mercifully provided by the Lord to enable us to overcome them. It *appears*, indeed, as if they were natural, as if they were born with us; but this is *only* an appearance, it is not really so.

Thus, although by natural inheritance we are altogether defiled with evil, yet, when we have arrived at years of discretion, a large part of the things which then form our minds consist of these remains of good and truth, which from earliest infancy have been stored up within us by the Lord. These serve to temper and soften our states of evil and render us approachable by the angels. Yet they are not really ours; we feel that they are not ours until we have freely and voluntarily appropriated them; no, not until we have made them ours by reducing them to practice and so giving them birth in the natural or ultimate degree of our minds. We feel that they are above us; and they *are* above or within the natural mind.

These remains, then, are the kingdom of heaven existing in us *potentially*. They are the elements or ground from which our regeneration commences and without which it would not be possible. These are the things in and through which the Holy Spirit operates to redeem and save us. These are the things which give us the understanding to distinguish good from evil and the will to choose the one and reject the other. These are the things which point us the way to heaven and kindle in our hearts a desire to walk therein; which speak to us of the Heavenly Father's love, and give us some conception of angelic life; which excite us to struggle against our evil inclinations, and give us strength to overcome them; which reprove us when we do wrong, and soothe our aching hearts with the tears of repentance; which counsel and admonish, warn and beseech, and thus withhold us from plunging into the abyss. They do not, indeed, *compel* us to do right, but they prevent our evils from compelling us to do wrong. They are the whispers of the angels, the still, small voice of God.

Who seeks to drown this voice of love, who heeds not the counsels of these innocent things of heaven stored up by God within the heart, who shuts his ear against their warning voice, does so at his own soul's peril. He disregards, he despises the very things which most of all he ought to love and cherish, the innocent and essential things of the kingdom of heaven. "Take heed," therefore, "that ye despise not one of these little ones," saith the Lord.

XVIII.

INEFFICACY OF A DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.—Rev. xxii, 14.

The Bible is addressed to man as a spiritual being, that is, as a being possessed of a spiritual and immortal nature, endowed with spiritual faculties, having spiritual desires and wants, and destined ultimately to live in a spiritual world. This fact, if steadily kept in view, will help us to a right interpretation of the Bible. For in the light of it we may see that the true import of the Lord's words is not reached until we have grasped their spiritual meaning, or the meaning suited to our wants as spiritual beings. Accordingly, when men are said in Scripture to be *blessed*, it is spiritual blessings to which the Lord refers, and of which we ought to think. These correspond to natural blessings. Natural blessings are an abundant supply of those things which minister to our natural wants and to the gratification of all our natural senses. Material wealth, pleasant surroundings, bodily health, genial companions,—these are natural blessings; and they are the only blessings that the merely natural man thinks of or is ambitious to attain. And they are blessings not to be despised. They are blessings to be sought after and to be thankful for. But they are not the richest blessings. They are not the heavenly blessings promised to those who become the children of God. You *may* have them all in great profusion and still be unblessed in the highest sense of the word. With an abundance of these natural blessings your soul may be mean and sordid, scrimped and distorted, cold, selfish, and unloving; and you, therefore, your real self, be inwardly restless, forlorn, desolate, and wretched.

Only those, then, are blessed, in the true, heavenly, Bible sense of the word, whose souls are imbued with the spirit of the Lord; who have grown to be just and true and sincere, gentle and tender and trustful, humble and patient and self-denying, victorious over all the evil propensities of their nature, full of sympathy for every wise and just cause, and for every noble and manly deed. Such only are blessed in the highest degree—spiritually blessed. They are blessed with soul-health, with an inward strength, serenity, joy, and peace, with the delights of heavenly life, such as the merely natural man can have no conception of.

And we grow into this state gradually as we advance from infancy to manhood, from a state of ignorance to one of knowledge; and we grow into it by the religious application of truth to life, that is, by keeping the commandments from a religious principle. Yes, from *religious principle;* for this heavenly growth does not commence in the soul until we begin to regard evil actions as sins against God, and shun them because they are sins. Then only do we begin to keep the Lord's commandments from the heart, or to do them internally and spiritually. And then the soul begins to be opened to an influx of the Divine life, of that pure unselfish love which is the very substance and life of the commandments, and is indeed the fruit of the tree of life; for the Lord Himself is that tree, whose fruit is the bread that cometh down from heaven, the unselfish love that flows into the natural or external degree of the mind, as we obey the commandments from religious principle. We may thus see why it is said, and what is meant when it is said, as in the words before us: "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

By *the city* is here meant the New Jerusalem, which signifies the Lord's true church on earth, including all of every name who are internally conjoined to Him. And as the church on earth is in such fellowship with the church in heaven that they form as it were one family, therefore to enter into the church is to enter into heaven or the heavenly state at the same time. The *gates* are the knowledges of divine and heavenly things, the knowledges of the Lord, of the nature of heaven and hell, and of what we must do to be saved. For it is through such knowledges and the religious application of them to life, as through gates of entrance, that we pass from a hellish to a heavenly state of life.

To one, then, who has for years yielded to the promptings of his natural selfish loves regardless of the Divine commandments, who has lived a thoughtless, irreligious, wicked life, the things absolutely essential to his entrance into the kingdom of heaven are faith in the Lord, repentance, and obedience to the Divine commandments; for there is no such thing as doing the Divine commandments from religious principle without faith in the Lord; and there can be no true repentance until one sees and acknowledges particular evils in himself, supplicates the Divine aid that he may overcome them, and actually begins a new life,—begins by regarding and shunning the indulgence of evil as a sin against God.

And now comes the question: May a man live for many years an irreligious and wicked life, confirming himself more and more in evil by audaciously trampling on the laws of heaven, at last commit some terrible crime the legal penalty of which is death, and then, a few days or hours before he meets a felon's doom, repent, believe on the Lord, have his sins all washed away, and pass from the gallows direct to heaven?

This question the Old Theology answers with an emphatic *Yes*, while the New Theology answers with an equally emphatic *No*. And the respective answers to this question define very sharply the difference between the Old and the New; for in each case the answer is interwoven with the whole structure of the system that gives it, and flows from it by legitimate and necessary sequence.

The Old, I say, answers, Yes. You read its answer in the assurance given by its ministers to every condemned criminal however guilty. They tell him that the atoning blood of Christ is sufficient to wash from his soul all the stains of guilt and sin; and that if he will but believe this and repent one hour before he leaves this world, he may be instantaneously converted into a saint and pass at once from earth to heaven. A condemned felon, awaiting the execution of the law's stern decree, writes from his cell a few days before his death: "My time on earth is short, but, blessed be God, there is a better land above where, by faith in the great atonement of that Being who took upon Himself the sins of the whole world and endured the punishment in order that we poor sinners might escape the righteous law of God . . . we may have a home throughout the countless ages of eternity." And this is in strict accordance with the teaching of the Old and still popular theology. One of the accepted "evangelical" organs of the day says, in one of its late issues: "The gospel of the evangelical sects is so simple, that their ministers and their laymen can go to a dying man steeped in sin and say, 'Between you and death there are only a few minutes. You are a sinner; but put forth your trust in Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.'"

Yes; "the gospel of the evangelical sects," but *not* the gospel of Jesus Christ. And if it were only that "dying man" who was deceived by it, we should have less reason to complain. But multitudes of the living are deceived by it, it may be to their soul's eternal ruin. It involves an utterly false conception of both the nature and way of salvation.

First, we say this doctrine is unreasonable. It is contrary to all our human experience and to all we know of the Divine operations in nature and in grace, to suppose that the character—the man's ruling love—

can be so quickly changed; that one can be thus suddenly transformed from a sinner to a saint, changed in a moment from a child of Satan to a child of God. Are there any facts in nature or in the experience of mankind to justify such a belief? But the doctrine is in strict accord, we see, with that of justification and salvation by faith alone. It is, indeed, the legitimate offspring of it.

And it is equally contrary to Scripture. The Bible teaches nothing more plainly than that each one in the great Hereafter will be judged and rewarded according to his works, not according to the merely outward acts, but according to the prompting motives, according to the person's character or ruling love. "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven." "And my reward is with me, to give every man according as his *work* shall be." "And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their *works*." "Blessed are they that *do* His commandments."

And being both unreasonable and unscriptural, and, of course, contrary to the truth, this Old doctrine is, as might be expected, mischievous in its practical operation. It is hurtful, dangerous, demoralizing in its tendency. Teach men that there is such a mysterious and transforming efficacy in the blood of Christ, that the vilest sinner can through faith and trust in that blood, put forth as a mental exercise a few moments before death, have his sins all washed away and be instantly prepared for the kingdom of heaven, and let this teaching be accepted for the truth, let it take its place among men's settled religious convictions, and the effect of it cannot be otherwise than pernicious. Multitudes will be led by it to postpone the work of repentance and all thought of a righteous life until near the hour of their death. In their hearts they will reason after this manner: "What need is there of my repenting and keeping God's commandments now, which would require of me oftentimes a painful struggle against my natural inclinations? What need of beginning now to deny self, take up the cross, and follow the Lord, when there is a much shorter and speedier way to heaven? I intend to repent and believe in the atoning sacrifice of Christ before I die. But since, according to the generally accepted theology, I really require but a few moments in which to do all that, I think I can afford to postpone the matter a while longer; why not till the day of my death?" "But that is running a great risk," answers the Old theology; "for you may die very suddenly." "Granted," is the answer; "but as almost every one has a brief warning, 'a few moments' in which to prepare—not one in a hundred dying instantly, as by the lightning's stroke—I am therefore willing to take the risk."

Nothing is more certain than that some such process of reasoning as this is sure to go on in the hearts of many who accept the Old dogma of salvation by faith alone, and believe that saving faith may be acquired or "put forth" instantly, a day or an hour before one's death. Not that religious guides and teachers openly encourage or approve of such reasoning, for they do not. But the dogma itself encourages it, for it declares that the vilest sinner *may* in a moment have his sins all washed away and be transformed into a saint. I say, therefore, that this dogma is most dangerous and demoralizing in its tendency, and deserves to be everywhere and at all times held up to the scorn and reprobation of good men. All the more dangerous and demoralizing is it because it is so seductive, chiming in with the natural man's desire to obtain the most he can in the easiest and quickest way, to win a fortune by the turn of a wheel, to gain heaven with the least possible effort.

But the New Church teaches quite a different doctrine. It rejects the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, and teaches that every one takes his own life with him into the other world; and that the quality of this life is determined there as here by the quality of his ruling love; and if this be supremely selfish, his life is evil, is hellish life; and by his very nature, therefore, he gravitates toward some infernal society of a character kindred to his own. But if the ruling love is good, he gravitates toward some angelic society of those who are in a similar kind and degree of good.

And the character or ruling love, says the New theology, cannot be suddenly changed. It is not changed by mere belief or faith; no, nor by any amount of oral prayers, penitent confessions, or pious exclamations,—only by doing the commandments, shunning evil as sin against God. Nor can a man's life or character, if evil, be changed on his death-bed, or when he is under legal sentence of death, or in any condition of danger, or state of fear or misfortune or bodily sickness; for these things, while they are operative, rob one of that freedom and rationality without which there can be no reformation or regeneration. What one elects to say and do in a state of alarm or danger is not his soul's free choice. A man when in jeopardy of life or limb may promise that which, when the danger is passed, he has no desire to perform, and will not do except on compulsion. (Read D. P. 139–40–42.)

But cannot a man repent and have his ruling love changed after death? May not the work of reformation and regeneration commence in the other world if not begun on earth? The letter of Scripture certainly does not give an affirmative answer to these questions. The "everlasting punishment" and the "fire that *never* shall be quenched" do not seem to favor the notion that an evil life may be exchanged for a good one in the other world. And in the revelations made for the New Church we are distinctly taught that this cannot be done, that the ruling love remains forever unchanged after death. (Read D. P. 277, A. C. 7541, H. H. 480–527.)

And the reason is, that the natural degree of the mind is and must forever remain the basis and receptacle of our spiritual life. It is this degree which is deranged and therefore needs to be regenerated. If it remains unchanged and its perverted or inverted form becomes hardened and fixed by habit here on earth, so that it changes the influent life of God into its very opposite, how can it become changed after death? (Read H. H. 480, A. C. 4588–6977–10243, C. L. 524, Brf. Ex. 110.)

The doctrine of the New Church, then, on this as on other subjects, is in harmony with reason, experience, and the Sacred Scripture. And its practical tendency is most salutary. It assures us that there is no such thing as salvation by faith alone. It says there can be no real repentance or reformation without the shunning of evils as sins, and the free and voluntary keeping of the Divine commandments; none, therefore, in the doomed felon's cell, at the foot of the gallows, on the bed of death, or in any condition of danger or state of anxiety or alarm. It declares that bodily death works no change in a man's moral or spiritual condition; that each one passes into the other world precisely as he leaves this world, taking with him his ruling love, which constitutes his very life; and that if this life be evil or supremely selfish, it will remain so forever—it cannot be changed in the other world. Nevertheless the mercy of the Lord is so great that He provides a home for all in the other world, for the evil as well as the good; and forces none into uncongenial society, but permits every one to seek and enjoy the companionship of those most like himself. The supremely selfish, therefore, seek from choice the society of devils most like themselves, for with such only do they feel at home; the sweet atmosphere of heaven would be to them unspeakable torture. And the good, those who have begun on earth to do the Heavenly Father's will, and so to develop within them the life of heaven, they, by the operation of the same unfailing law, will gravitate to some congenial angelic society, where they will find their eternal home, where their goodness will be stimulated to more intense activity, and their progress in all that enlarges, exalts, and blesses the soul will be unending. "Blessed therefore are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

XIX.

SPIRITUAL COMPENSATION.

For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.—LUKE VI, 38.

In the revelations made for the New Church we have abundant illustrations of the laws of the heavenly life, some of them from Swedenborg's own experience, and some from that of the angels. In the Heavenly Arcana it is said:—

> "When an angel does good to any one, he also communicates to him his own good, satisfaction, and blessedness, so that he is willing to give everything to the other and to retain nothing; when he is in such communication, good flows in with satisfaction and blessedness to him in a much greater degree than he gives; and this continually with perpetual increase. . . . This it has been given me to know from much experience. . . . The Lord is such that He wills to give Himself to all; hence satisfaction and blessedness are increased with those who become images and likenesses of Him." (A. C. 6478.)

Thus it is in the spiritual world, where the laws revealed in the Divine Word, which, rightly interpreted, are all of them laws of our spiritual life, are best exemplified. There all receive according as they give, all who are in the love of what is good and true, and thus in heaven receive a delight proportioned to the good which they intend or do, and to the purity or disinterestedness of the love from which they do it. And all who are in evil there, and thus in hell, are in the punishment of evil. For evil is so conjoined with its own punishment that it cannot be separated from it. And the more an evil spirit does evil, the deeper does he plunge himself into the punishment of evil. With the same measure that he metes it is measured to him again.

And this divine law, expressed in the words of our text, is partially executed upon every individual, even while he lives in this world. For even here the souls of men become more and more receptive of heavenly love, joy, and bliss, in proportion as they yield a prompt and cheerful obedience to the revealed laws of the heavenly life. They become more meek, gentle, patient, and forbearing as they practise these heavenly graces. They grow more unselfish by the practice of self-denial. They receive more and more of neighborly love just in the degree that they exercise that love, or try to serve the neighbor—try to advance the highest welfare of individuals, the community, the country, or humanity. And, on the other hand, the more they cherish evil thoughts and feelings, and commit wicked deeds, the more is heaven closed against them, the darker is their sky, and the gloomier their path. Infernal thoughts, purposes, and deeds bring ever-increasing torment to the soul while here on earth. Every wrong we do or deliberately intend is a curse upon ourselves. We may not always see or heed it, but its damning stains are on us nevertheless. And all the pain and sorrow and suffering that we give to others will be given back into our own bosoms, sooner or later.

Thus the law, which is revealed in the words of our text, and which is so surely and so fully executed in the spiritual world, like all other spiritual laws, extends even to this world, and is partially executed upon every one here. For here we all begin to receive (spiritually) according as we give. With the same measure that we mete, it begins to be measured to us again even here.

It is from overlooking this law that people often err in measuring the good accomplished by themselves or others by the merely outward or visible success of their efforts. We may, and often do, deceive ourselves by such a standard. Here is an object which you deem good and worthy, and you direct all your energies toward its accomplishment. You give to it your time, your money, your talents, your affection. But as to any visible success your efforts prove unavailing. Some unforeseen occurrences prevent you from accomplishing the object at which you aim. You are baffled at every turn by circumstances over which you have no control. And, judging by the ordinary standard, it *seems* as if your labor had been wasted, as if you had planned and counseled and prayed and worked all to no purpose.

But have you really failed? Have your good *endeavors*, the exercise of your benevolent intentions, the free outgoings and outgivings of your heart for others' welfare,—have these been of no use? Useless they may have been to others, but not to *you*. You have gained some valuable experience, some useful instruction, some wholesome discipline, some added strength or courage or patience or resignation—perhaps all these together. And sooner or later the full measure of the good which you intended, desired, helped, and labored to accomplish, every grain of heaven that mingled with your affections and prompted your acts, will be given unto your own bosom.

No. A good endeavor! Not one can ever fail; not one can ever be all unblest. For the highest and richest blessing is always sure to descend upon the soul of him who makes the good endeavor.

You are interested in the doctrines of heaven; your soul is enlightened and quickened by them; you see them to be all aglow with the light and love and power of God; and you earnestly desire that others also should receive and be blest by them. Animated by a generous enthusiasm, and full of hope and Christian charity, you go forth with heart-felt desire and earnest endeavor to impart to others a knowledge of heavenly things. But everywhere you meet with a repulse. None are prepared to receive what you are so willing and desirous to give. The things which you know to be pearls are treated by some in a swinish way. What then? Is your labor lost? Your time wasted? Your efforts fruitless? Ah, friend! You forget what you yourself have received meanwhile from the bountiful Giver of all good. You forget what crowds of angels your good endeavors have served to draw around you. You forget what clearer views of truth, what happier thoughts and better feelings and purer desires and brighter hopes and loftier aspirations and firmer resolutions you have received—and will forever continue to receive—as a reward for your generous efforts. You forget that while you have been striving to impart unto others the precious things of heaven which your eyes have seen, the Lord in His matchless bounty has been pouring these same things —the light of His wisdom and the warmth of His love—in more copious streams into your own bosom. You forget that for every good and truth that you have given or *tried* to give to others, for every deed of genuine charity, for every act of disinterested love and kindness you have performed, the Lord has given into your bosom good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.

And so in regard to every good and useful enterprise; to every just and righteous cause in which we engage *from a right motive.* However it may fail of success to outward appearance, *we cannot* fail to receive an internal reward—a spiritual blessing—exactly proportioned to the purity of our motive and the extent of the good which we aimed to do. And if we *suffer* in a just cause, a full compensation for every pain and loss and sorrow that we endure will be made us in this world or in the next, and others also shall be blessed through our suffering.

So, too, in regard to wicked deeds or undertakings, schemes of fraud, injustice, and oppression; enterprises engaged in with evil intentions or from base and sordid motives. However successful to the outward eye, they are miserable failures, every one of them; for they fail to bring the only real and enduring treasures, the rewards of a good conscience, the strength of love, the light of truth, the peace and rest and joy of heaven. But, instead thereof, they bring dark thoughts, hardened feelings, benumbed sensibilities, deadened sympathies, beclouded hopes, a feverish anxiety, the most miserable and squalid poverty of soul.

Real success or failure is not, therefore, to be estimated by the outward appearance, and almost never by immediate results. So far as we ourselves are concerned, the measure of our zeal, our unselfish devotion, our labors, our prayers, our sufferings in and for the right, is the measure of our real success, for it measures precisely the reward that will ultimately be meted out to us. As the philosophic poet has truly said:—

"Just and strong and opportune is the moral rule of God;
Ripe in its times, firm in its judgments, equal in the measure of its gifts.
Yet men, scanning the surface, count the wicked happy,
Nor heed the compensating peace which gladdeneth the good in his afflictions.
They see not the frightful dreams that crowd a bad man's pillow
Like wreathed adders crawling round his midnight conscience;
They know not the torturing suspicions that sting his panting breast,
When the clear eye of penetration quietly readeth off the truth.
Likewise of the good, what know they? The memories bringing pleasure,

Shrined in the heart of the benevolent, and glistening
from his eye;
The calm, self-justifying reason that establisheth the
upright in his purpose;
The warm and gushing bliss that floodeth all the
thoughts of the religious."

By understanding the great spiritual law disclosed in our text, we shall be able to understand many other passages in the Divine Word, wherein is found language of a kindred nature. We shall see why the Lord says to His disciples, as in the verse immediately preceding our text, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven;" and why He commands us to do to others as we would have others do to us; and to pray, "forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." It is impossible for us to receive the Divine forgiveness upon any other condition save this—that we ourselves exercise the spirit of forgiveness. The Lord's forgiveness is but the revelation or manifestation to our consciousness of His Divine love; and His love cannot be consciously revealed in us; that is, we cannot receive His love so as to experience its sweet and tender and merciful and forgiving nature, except in the degree that we resist and overcome our natural selfishness, and so remove from our hearts what is contrary to that love. To *forgive* is to regard and shun as a sin against God the natural disposition to retaliate injuries. It is to shun the disposition to return evil for evil, hate for hate; and to act even toward enemies, or those who have injured us, from a genuine spiritual affection, that is, from a desire for their best good. For to do otherwise is to cherish hatred. In that case we cannot receive the divine forgiveness; for hatred is the opposite of neighborly love, and we cannot, while hatred dwells in our hearts, experience the blessings of divine love. "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven," therefore, is the everlasting law. Our debts are forgiven precisely in the degree that we forgive our debtors. They cannot be forgiven upon any other condition. In respect to forgiveness, therefore, as in respect to all other spiritual acts and graces, the same measure with which we mete is meted out to us.

Then, as to *judging*, the revealed doctrines of heaven teach us that it is lawful and right to judge the actions of others, or their moral and civil life, but not their spiritual state or quality, since this is known only to the Lord. Thus, while it is allowable to say of anyone that if he be such in internals as he appears to be in externals, he will be saved or condemned, it is *not* allowable to say *you are* such in internals, and therefore you will be saved or condemned. (C. L. 523.) This is forbidden by the words, "Judge not." And if we presume to do so, we by that very act pronounce a judgment on our own state. In condemning others we condemn ourselves, because we act in a way that the divine truth condemns. We act contrary to a law of heavenly charity. But if we refrain from this and shun it as a sin, then we escape condemnation, because we shun and thus escape the evil of such presumption; and it is the evil which always brings us into condemnation. Hence it is written, " For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged."

We may understand, also, from what has been said, why it was among the laws of the Israelitish church, that " if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth." (Lev. xxiv, 19, 20.) The Jews were only an external and representative church, and, being deeply in the love of retaliating injuries (as, indeed, all natural men are), they could be easily induced to represent, and did represent by their literal observance of this law, the law of spiritual compensation or retaliation, which is never to pass away; the law that every evil which we commit, with every atom of its weight, will ultimately recoil upon ourselves; that every wrong we do another, or deliberately intend to do, is sure to come back and brand itself upon our own souls with every trace of its dark lineaments: " Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe"—this is the unalterable law which none of us can by any possibility escape.

That this law is not now to be literally observed, and that the Jews did not understand its spiritual import, is plain from the Lord's words in Matthew, where He commands us not to retaliate injuries or resist evil with evil (as we are naturally inclined to do), and says: " Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you that ye resist not evil." This is said in close connection with the Saviour's declaration that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it—that is, *to fill it out* by vitalizing it, living it, and so revealing its fulness of spiritual light and life. And so this old Jewish law of retaliation, when *filled out*, is seen to be none other than that great law of spiritual compensation of which I have been speaking, and which, like all the laws of God, is unalterable and eternal.

There is, then, in the spiritual sense of our text, instruction of the highest practical moment for all who are seeking the life of heaven. We learn from it this great lesson, that, in respect to spiritual things—things which relate to our eternal life—we all receive in exact proportion as we give. Whatever sacrifices or efforts we make to promote the extension of truth and love and justice among men, whatever we give of sincere and earnest endeavor to advance the interests of the Lord's kingdom on earth, whatever of the spirit's temper of heaven we communicate to other minds by our words of truth and deeds of love, and uniform exhibition of Christian charity in the daily walks and duties of life, with that same measure, precisely, will the things of heaven and the church be meted out to us. If we give liberally; that is, if we are zealous and self-sacrificing in the cause of truth and righteousness, and are willing, for the sake of its advancement, to practice much self-denial, to exercise temperance, patience, forbearance, resignation, trust, and so become mediums in communicating these heavenly graces to others in liberal measure, then we shall receive *as* liberally—"good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over."

But if we are careless and indifferent about the things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, if we exercise or exhibit but little of the spirit of Christian charity in our daily lives, thus if we give or do but little to advance the interests of truth and love and justice here below, and do that little grudgingly, then we may be sure that the things of heaven will be given us *as* grudgingly; for the measure in which we give determines with mathematical precision our capacity to receive. "For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again."

XX.

GREATNESS IN THE GOSPEL SENSE.

Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.—Matt. xx, 26–28.

It is recorded in the chapter from which these words are taken that on one occasion the mother of two of the disciples came to our Lord, "desiring a certain thing of Him," and that thing was nothing less than that He would grant her two sons the privilege of sitting, "one on the right hand and the other on the left in His kingdom." She had the same natural ambition for the advancement of her children that most mothers now-a-days have; for she supposed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and she had the prevailing but mistaken idea of her nation in regard to the nature of the kingdom He had come to establish. And so had most if not all of His disciples. And the ten, it is said, "had indignation against the two brethren," presuming that they had prompted their mother's request. Then Jesus called them all to Him and began to teach that greatness in His kingdom was quite a different thing from what they imagined; that it did not consist in natural or political preferment, but in serving the neighbor, not ruling him after the manner of the Gentiles. And then come the words of our text.

Can anything be more revolutionary than the gospel? It is directly at war with the deepest desires and most cherished sentiments of the natural human heart. It strikes at convictions older than the pyramids, at loves which the race have been indulging, nursing, feeding, and strengthening for ages. It seeks to uproot these convictions and to overthrow or change the loves which have struck their roots down deep into the vitals of humanity, and grown to be the dominant loves, the very life of the race. What a work is this which the Gospel proposes! Nothing less than changing the character of the human race, delivering mankind from the thraldom of evil loves and false persuasions, rescuing them from their bondage to sin and Satan, and bringing them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. A revolution, indeed! And one of such vast magnitude, and so deep and radical in its nature, that its very conception is worthy of an infinite Being, and its accomplishment demanding the wisdom of Omniscience and the strength of Omnipotence.

The two sons of Zebedee and their mother are but types of the whole human family in their unregenerate state. For in this state self-love is supreme. And self-love is always ambitious; not to impart, but to receive; not to do for others, but to have others do for it. It is clamorous for position, wealth, power, preferment, not as a means of serving others, but of obtaining service from them. It lusts after pre-eminence and supreme dominion. It is, in its very nature, a despot, and the prince of despots; tyrannical everywhere, in the family, in the school, in the factory, in the field, in the shop and in society, in the state and in the church. It is the self-same love that rules in hell, and is, itself, the prince of darkness. The very fire of the abyss, it consumes all the verdure and bloom and beauty in the soul, converts our Eden into a desert, and leaves the gloom of desolation, the blackness of death, in its track. It is the fire of Gehenna that never shall be quenched, unless quenched by the spirit of truth—quenched by the application of the water of life that proceedeth out of the throne of God. Yet this is the sad inheritance of us all; for the natural or hereditary life of each one of us is supremely selfish. And the worst of it is, most people seem not to know, and are unwilling to believe, that the love of self, when it reigns supreme, *is* the fire of hell that is consuming within them the beauty of the Lord. And so, instead of seeking, as the first great end of life, to quench this soul-devouring flame, they nurse and feed and strengthen it day by day.

Thus is it with all who have not begun seriously to look to the Lord, and to follow Him in the regeneration; who have not yet acknowledged Him for their Teacher and Guide, and learned of Him the way of life. They lust after power, authority, pre-eminence, dominion, all for selfish ends; reckless of the rights, the feelings, the welfare or happiness of others. "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them." But this is not heavenly. It is the opposite of what the Lord requires of His followers. He requires all who would come after Him, to deny and put away their natural love of ruling over others, and receive the opposite kind of love—His own love—which delights in serving others. Therefore, He says to His disciples:

"But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Here is announced a new standard of greatness, different from any ever heard of before—the true, heavenly standard, the perfect, divine standard—and, therefore, of universal application. According to this announcement, a man's greatness is to be estimated not by any artificial or conventional standard, not by his worldly rank or wealth, not by his physical stature or strength, not by his social elevation or official position, not by his intellectual power or acquirements. He may be great in any one or all of these, yet very diminutive when subjected to this divine standard of greatness. A man is great in the highest or Gospel sense of the word, just in the degree that he consecrates himself to useful service, not from hope of reward, but from love of the Master and a desire to become a form of use in His kingdom.

Yes; serving others from the love of serving, performing uses, the highest that we are capable of performing, from the love of being useful;—this is the noble ambition which the Lord would awaken in every human breast. This is the ambition that He *does* awaken in the hearts of His sincere followers. This is the ambition which the Gospel encourages, and the only kind of ambition that can enter the kingdom of God. The desire for greatness, according to the heavenly standard, is a lawful desire. It is the desire to minister and serve; the desire to employ all our powers of body and of mind in a manner most useful to others, for that is most pleasing to the Lord. This is a right and heavenly desire, and one, therefore, which we ought by all means to encourage and stimulate in ourselves and others. It is one that we *must* encourage if we hope to enter the kingdom of heaven; for that kingdom is a kingdom of ends and uses; and we come into it just so far as we come into that heavenly state in which we find a delight in the performance of uses—a delight in ministering and serving, or doing good to others from love toward them. This is the teaching of the Gospel as interpreted in the writings of the New Church.

Accordingly, we read, among the things revealed from heaven, that certain professed Christians once entered the spiritual world under the belief, previously induced, that they should reign with Christ as kings and princes, and that angels should then minister to them, to whom the angels said:—

> "Have you forgotten the Lord's words, that whosoever would be great in heaven, let him be a servant? Learn then what is meant by kings and princes, and reigning with Christ; that it is to know and perform uses; for the kingdom of Christ, which is heaven, is a kingdom of uses; for the Lord loves all, and thence wills good to all; but good is use, and because the Lord does good or uses mediately by the angels, and in the world by men, so to them who faithfully do uses He gives the love of use and its reward, which is eternal blessedness, and this is eternal happiness." (C. L. 7.)

They further told those new comers to the other world:—

> "There are three things which flow into our minds as one from the Lord; these three, or this trine, are love, wisdom, and use; but love and wisdom do not exist except ideally, when only in the affections and thoughts of the mind, but they exist in use really, because they are simultaneously in act and bodily work; and where they exist really, there they also subsist; and because love and wisdom exist and subsist in use, it is use which affects us; and use is, faithfully, sincerely, and diligently to perform the duties of one's function. The love of use, and therefrom a fixed attention to use, holds the mind together, so that it may not flow forth and dissipate itself." (Ibid. 16.)
>
> "Love cannot be easy unless it is doing, for love is the active principle of life; neither can wisdom exist and subsist unless when it is doing from love and with it, and to do is use. Wherefore, we define use, that it is to do good from love by means of wisdom; use is good itself." (Ibid. 183.)

Again, on another occasion, discoursing of that eternal rest from labor whereof the Bible speaks, the angels said:—

> "Eternal rest is not idleness, since from idleness is languor, torpor, stupor, and deep sleep of the mind, and thence of the body; and these are death and not life, and still less eternal life, in which the angels of heaven are; wherefore eternal rest is a rest which dispels these and causes man to live; and this is something that elevates the mind, some study and work by which the mind is excited, vivified, and delighted. . . . Hence it is that the entire heaven is regarded by the Lord as containing uses; and every angel is an angel according to use; the pleasure of the use carries him on as a favorable stream does a ship, and causes him to be in eternal peace, and in the rest of peace. Thus is understood eternal rest from labors." (Ibid. 207.)

Thus does the Gospel, as now understood and interpreted, revolutionize the natural man's idea of heavenly rest as well as of heavenly greatness. It teaches us that it is not the rest of idleness or inaction, but the rest of equipoise and congenial exertion; the rest which results from the free exercise and harmonious play of all the faculties of the soul while engaged in some useful calling; a rest like that of the mighty forces of nature, which are never more active than when their balance is undisturbed; a rest like that of our bodily organs, whose harmonious and incessant activity is indispensable to bodily health; or like that of the swallow on the wing, cleaving the air in joyous strength and at fullest speed, poised on its outspread pinions.

Dedicating ourselves, then, to some useful service—living for others, laboring for others, serving others,—this is the greatness that is acknowledged in heaven and taught in the Gospel. And this, too, is what opens the soul to an influx of the true joys of heaven. For it is in vain for an idle person, or one who performs no use in the world nor seeks to perform any, to expect happiness. An idle life is a useless life; and a useless life can never be a happy life, either in this world or in the world to come. And the obvious reason is, because we were created to become forms of use in the kingdom of God; and if we are not seeking to fulfil this end of our existence, by developing through habitual exercise our powers of usefulness, we are not living as God intended we should; and, of course, we cannot receive from Him the sweet satisfaction and joy that accompanies a life of faithful service. Happiness, here and hereafter, is a sure consequence of the normal and healthy condition of the soul. And the soul can no more be kept in health without the active employment of its faculties in work of use, than our bodies can be kept in health without bodily exercise. Our mental the same as our physical powers grow bright, active, vigorous, and strong with the using, and the more they are used the more vigorous and strong they become; and with strength and vigor come health and joy. Put forth strength, and you shall receive more strength. Exert your nimbleness and skill to-day, and you shall be more nimble and skilful to-morrow. Exercise yourself in wise, generous, and loving deeds, and you shall grow more wise, generous, and loving day by day. "Give, and it shall be given unto you," is the irrevocable and God-given law; and "with *the same measure* that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again."

But the faculties of the soul may be exercised, service may be rendered, good service, uses may be performed, high and noble uses, but all from such a mistaken end or such ignoble motives that no heavenly reward will be received. The end may be purely personal and selfish. It may be the reward which the world has to bestow—the reputation, the honor, the emoluments, the prestige, which the good service rendered or the uses well performed will secure. And this reward they may obtain; for even the hypocrites, who sound trumpets before them, and do their alms before men to be seen of them, even *they* have their reward, but what is it? Not the reward of the Father which is in the heavens, not the reward of higher aspirations, or purer love, or nobler life. The highest and richest reward, yea, the heavenly and eternal reward, of serving others is an increase of the love of serving and of the happiness which this love brings. I do not mean that uses performed on the natural plane should not receive a natural recompense; for it is right they should. But I mean that there is a higher, even a heavenly reward, such as the world cannot give. This reward is the continually growing love of, capacity for, and delight in the use itself. For the more we grow into the love of use, the more we grow to be like the angels; yea, the nearer we come to the likeness of the Heavenly Father. And we grow into this love by thinking primarily of the use itself, and studying to perform it faithfully and well; and thinking secondarily of the honors and emoluments resulting therefrom. If the latter be regarded primarily the true order is reversed; our end is selfish and worldly, and we fail of the heavenly reward. The performance of the use is then a drudgery; we experience no delight in it; we do not grow in love with it; we perform it perfunctorily; we carry into our service no love of the Lord or the neighbor; and, of course, we receive no heavenly blessedness from its performance; our love of the Lord and the neighbor does not increase, but our love of self and the world; for it is from this latter love that we act, and this, therefore, we nurse and strengthen; and in the exercise of this latter love there is none of the peace and bliss of heaven, for the Lord is not in it, nor the angels. Accordingly we are taught in the Heavenly Arcana:—

"They who are in genuine mutual love are in their delight and blessedness when they do good to their neighbor, for they desire nothing better. This delight and blessedness is what is meant by hire in the Word; for the delight itself or blessedness is hire, and in the other life it becomes the joy and happiness which are in heaven,—thus it becomes heaven to them; for when they, who in heaven are in mutual love, perform uses and do good to others, they are in such joy and happiness that they seem to themselves then first to be in heaven; this is given them by the Lord, and to everyone according to uses. But this happiness vanishes as soon as they think of recompense, for thought concerning recompense, whilst they are actually in recompense itself, renders the above love impure and perverts it; because, in such case, they think of themselves and not of their neighbor, viz., that they may render themselves happy, but not others, unless so far as they are happy themselves.

"Thus they convert love toward the neighbor into love toward themselves; and so far as they do this, so far they are incapable of receiving the communications of joy and happiness from heaven, for they concentrate the influx of happiness from heaven in themselves, but do not transmit it to others; and they are like objects which do not reflect the rays of light, but absorb them." (A. C. 6388.)

"They who do good merely with a view to recompense cannot possibly know that in doing good without recompense the happiness is so great that it is celestial; the reason is because they perceive a happiness in the delight of self-love; and so far as man perceives delight in this love, so far he does not perceive delight in heavenly love, for they are opposite; as the former delight, which flows from self-love, altogether extinguishes the delight from heavenly love, insomuch that it is absolutely unknown what heavenly delight is, and if its quality be described it is not believed, and is even denied.

"This it has been given me to know from the evil spirits in the other life, who, whilst they lived, did nothing of good to others or to their country, unless for the sake of themselves; such do not believe that there can be any delight in doing good without a view to recompense; for they suppose, if there be no view to recompense, that all delight ceases. And if they are further told that when that delight ceases the heavenly delight begins, they are amazed on hearing it; and still more so when they hear that that heavenly delight flows in through the inmost principle of man, and affects his interiors with inexpressible felicity. At this they are more amazed, and say that they cannot comprehend it,—yea, that neither do they will it, for they believe that, should they lose the delight of self-love, they would be most miserable, because they would then be deprived of all the joy of life; they also call those simple who are in another state. Not unlike such are they who do works with a view to recompense; for they do good works for themselves and not for others, because they regard themselves therein, but not their neighbor, nor their country, nor heaven, nor the Lord, except as those who are in their debt and owe them a benefit." (A. C. 6391; see, also, 6393 and 6478.)

Such is the instruction revealed from heaven for all who desire to learn the way to heaven. To be great, in the heavenly and true Gospel sense, is to serve others and minister to their welfare; to serve, not from selfish ends or with a view to the honors and emoluments thence resulting, but from love of others or from a desire to be useful. The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of uses. And the greatest there, yea, the chief ones among the followers of the Lord everywhere, are those who perform the most and highest uses from the purest love; that is, with the least thought of themselves or desire of personal recompense. They are the greatest in the Gospel sense of this word, because they are in character nearest like their Divine Master, who "came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." It is love's nature to minister and serve; for it is its nature to impart unto others its own delights—to enlighten, quicken, save, and bless. This is the end for which the Lord assumed our fallen nature and glorified it; the end for which He came down to us in our state of ignorance, guilt, and sin,—bore the malignant assaults of all the hells,—labored, suffered, and at last died a cruel and ignominious death. His life on earth was a life of service, a life of unselfish devotion to the welfare of those around Him. He went about doing good. He instructed the ignorant, lifted up the lowly, sympathized with the sorrowing, fed the hungry, healed the sick, restored the lame, gave sight to the blind, and cast out devils from those that were possessed. Always and everywhere we behold Him as the very incarnation of Divine Love, seeking to enlighten, heal, and bless.

And His acts of willing service while on earth were but the symbols of what His love is always doing for the children of men; for He is always going about doing good; always feeding the hungry souls of men with the living bread; always healing the spiritual sicknesses of all who look to Him with confiding faith and desire to be healed; always casting out devils with His Word from hearts that humbly seek His help; at the same time bearing long and patiently—O, how patiently!—with our cruel mockeries, manifold treacheries, bitter hatreds, persecutions, and betrayals of Himself; or, what is the same, our mockeries and betrayals of those principles of truth and rectitude, those everlasting laws of love and justice, that are from Himself.

Yes, it is love's nature and office to serve; it is love's delight to serve. Love has no selfish ends, never seeks to be ministered unto, but to minister. And since love is the life and soul of truth, therefore truth has the same ends as love and comes for the same purpose. Hence, He who was the incarnation of truth and love came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

And since the angels all dwell in the Lord, and He in them, since they are all images and likenesses of Himself, therefore they are all in the love of doing good and of serving one another. There is no sweeter joy in heaven than that which springs from the performance of uses. In this the angels find their chief delight. This is the very life of heaven; for the Lord's love, with its ineffable delights, flows into the hearts of the angels just in the degree that they freely give it forth, or exercise themselves in good uses from love to the Lord and to each other.

And if we would grow to be like the angels, we must learn, like them, to minister and serve; we must learn, like them, to live for others; we must learn to be useful, and to find our chief delight in the performance of uses.

And the best way to learn this is to keep steadily before our minds the great truth that we were created to be forms of use in the kingdom of God; and that, so far as we fail to develop in ourselves the capacity and the love of being useful, so far we fail of attaining the great end of our existence. And the way to develop this capacity and this love is to apply ourselves diligently to some useful occupation. And however humble our vocation may be, if we strive to perform its duties faithfully and well, thinking more of this than of the earthly recompense, we shall daily grow more in love with the use, and perform it with increasing satisfaction and delight. And thus heaven will come down to us in our common every-day work; the Lord and the angels will draw nigh and work with us; and by their presence and their love they will consecrate our calling, and make us realize more and more what a blessed privilege it is to minister and serve.

XXI.

PRAYER.

After this manner, therefore, pray ye.—MATT. VI, 9.

The prevailing idea among Christians has been, that prayer can change, temporarily at least, the disposition and purpose of the Divine Being; that it can actually so operate upon the mind of God that He will feel and act differently toward the supplicant from what He otherwise would have felt and acted. This is a childish idea; yet it does no harm to those who hold it in childlike simplicity, as thousands do.

But people of thought and reflection see that this is a mistaken idea. They know that if the Creator is infinitely wise and good, as Christians profess to believe, then it is absurd to suppose that His purposes can be changed by the supplications of a frail and finite creature. Are not His purposes always good, say they, perfectly good? And if so, why should He ever change them? How is such fancied change to be reconciled with the perfection of His nature? with the infinity of His wisdom and love? Why then, they ask, should we pray to Him? What good is to be accomplished by it? For if God is omniscient, He surely knows all our deepest needs without our telling Him. And if He is infinite in love, He surely must intend and seek the highest welfare of all His creatures, and this whether they pray to Him or not. Thus do multitudes of intelligent people reason; and so they neglect to pray.

Then among those who do pray, there are many who know nothing of the true nature of prayer. They pray because the Lord in His Word commands us to do so. And many of this class fall under the persuasion that by repeating at stated intervals a certain form of words they obey the Divine requirements in reference to this subject. The prayers of such are cold and lifeless. They are mere dead forms. And all who confine themselves exclusively to a set form of words when they pray are in danger of losing the spirit of prayer and becoming mere formalists. It is another of the illusions of the natural mind to suppose that the Divine Being may be propitiated by the mere utterance of certain words and phrases, or that this alone can ward off evil or procure some special grace. Many such illusions, which are the mere appearances of truth drawn from the letter of the Word, becloud the minds of multitudes, even of professing Christians.

But the light of the New Dispensation, the light that beams from the face of the Son of Man at this His second coming like the splendors of a new morning, is fast chasing away the clouds and darkness which envelop the natural mind. This light, which is the light of the spiritual sense of the Word, the very light by which the angels see, is rapidly revealing many things which have hitherto been concealed from the eyes of men, and among others the true nature of prayer, its object and use, or what is really accomplished by it, and in what way. Prayer, then, is the topic to which our attention is now invited, and we will consider—

1st. The nature of prayer;

2d. Its use;

3d. The things which it is proper to pray for.

When these points shall have been duly considered we shall see what the Lord intended when He said, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye."

First, the nature of prayer: What is it? It is not a mere form of words, however beautiful, expressive, or perfect, or however devoutly uttered. Nor does it consist in solemn looks or pious tones or humble attitudes of the body. We may draw nigh unto God with our mouths and honor Him with our lips, while our hearts are far from Him. We may assume the attitude and tones and looks of devotion; we may kneel and repeat a form of prayer, yea, the most perfect of all forms, that which the Lord Himself has taught us, yet never truly pray. If in our hearts we feel no craving for the things which our words express, no longing after the imperishable gifts and graces of heaven—meekness, humility, sincerity, holiness, love, trust—no yearning for a nearer communion and closer conjunction with the Lord, then we offer no true prayer, whatever words our lips may utter. As we think, feel, desire, purpose, in the inner sanctuary of our souls, or when we enter into our closets, so we pray. The things which our *hearts* ask are the things we really pray for. In the beautiful language of Montgomery,—

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Unuttered or expressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near.

"Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice
Returning from his ways,
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And say—'Behold, he prays.'

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air,
His watchword at the gate of death;
He enters heaven by prayer."

There is no such thing as entering heaven without prayer—not lip-prayer merely, but internal, earnest, genuine heart-prayer. For to enter heaven is to have heaven enter into us. And heaven cannot enter into us unless we desire that it should, unless we long for the feelings, dispositions, and motives of heaven, and are willing to struggle against the opposite feelings, dispositions, and motives of hell. We cannot become humble without desiring to be humble; nor charitable without desiring to be charitable; nor just, generous, self-denying, loving, and trustful without desiring and laboring for these heavenly graces. We cannot be saved from the dominion of selfishness, covetousness, and sin without desiring such salvation. Our souls cannot attain to a state of conjunction with the Lord, which alone is happiness and heaven, without desiring, longing, and laboring for such conjunction. And such inward desire and longing, accompanied by the perception and acknowledgment that the Lord alone is able to deliver us from our bondage to hell and impart unto us the graces of heaven, is real prayer. It is incense acceptable to the Lord. And it is acceptable to Him *because* it is profitable to us. The illumined herald of the New Church says:—

> "Prayers are only the externals of worship, for they proceed from the man through his mouth; therefore a man's prayers are according to the quality of his life. It matters not if he assumes a humble deportment, kneels and sighs when he prays: these are external things, and unless the externals proceed from internals, they are only gestures and sounds without life. In every thing which a man utters there is affection; and every man, spirit, and angel is his own affection, for his affection is his life. It is the affection itself which speaks, and not the man without it. Wherefore the prayer is according to the quality of the affection. . . . A man continually prays when he is in the life of charity, although not with the mouth, yet with the heart; that which is of the love is continually in his thought, even when he is unconscious of it. Hence it is that prayer in the spiritual sense denotes worship from love. But these things are not relished by those who place piety in prayers, and not in the life." (Ap. Ex. 325.)

When, therefore, we are sensible of our own weakness and sinfulness, of our utter inability to deliver ourselves from the despotic power of evil spirits, and when, looking upward with humble trust and confidence, the language of our hearts is,—

Therefore, Lord, I come, believing
Thou canst give the power I need;
Through the prayer of faith receiving
Strength—the Spirit's strength, indeed.

I would trust in Thy protecting,
Wholly rest upon Thine arm;
Follow wholly Thy directing,
Thou, mine only guard from harm!

Keep me from mine own undoing,
Help me turn to Thee when tried,
Still my footsteps, Father, viewing,
Keep me ever at Thy side!—

Then we pray internally. And although our prayer is inaudible to men, it is audible enough to the ears of the Heavenly Father.

But it is important that the desires and feelings of the heart, when right, be not suffered to fail of their appropriate expression. It is important that they be permitted to flow forth into ultimates, to clothe themselves in appropriate words and actions. It is only in this way that the interior things of heaven become rooted and grounded in the exteriors of our minds, and so are multiplied and increased and rendered abiding. Desires and feelings that are not ultimated are fleeting and transitory. They are like shadows upon the landscape. They are as unsubstantial as dreams, and not a whit more efficacious in promoting the growth of the kingdom of heaven in the soul.

Some tender and benevolent feeling darts in upon you at times like a ray of sunshine, kindling a flame of love, and prompting you to speak some words of comfort, or to go and do some deed of kindness. How quickly that feeling passes away if its prompting be not heeded! And when it departs, how surely it leaves your soul more dark and desolate, more cold, selfish, forlorn, and dismal than it was before. But if the generous promptings be heeded, if the heavenly feeling be ultimated—that is, clothed in some appropriate words or outward acts,—how sure it is to remain and increase in strength, and become fruitful and multiply, and bring forth other feelings of tenderness and love after its kind! And this leads to the second point to be considered, viz.:—

The use of prayer. What special good is to be accomplished by it? For what purpose is prayer enjoined? Will the All-wise be any wiser for what such frail and ignorant mortals as we may say? Will He, who is infinite in love and mercy and compassion and long-suffering toward His creatures, be made one whit more compassionate, long-suffering, merciful, or loving by our prayers? Will He feel anywise differently toward us? Will He *do* differently from what He would have done without our prayers? *Will* the feeble petitions—be they ever so earnest and ever so devoutly uttered—of frail, erring, and dependent mortals like ourselves change in any degree the disposition or conduct of the omniscient and loving Father toward us?

Absolutely, no; relatively, yes. I mean by this that no change whatever, absolutely considered, is or can be wrought by our human petitions in the dispositions and feelings of the Lord toward us or toward any of the children of men. No prayers that we can offer can make the Supreme Ruler of the universe more desirous than, from His very nature, He always is to bless and do us good. They do not and cannot, absolutely, add anything to His wisdom. They cannot increase His knowledge of our wants. They cannot make Him more tender, compassionate, loving, or forgiving in His nature, nor change in the least His disposition or feelings toward us.

But, relatively speaking, that is, in relation to ourselves, prayer does change or *seem* to change (for the change is only in appearance) the disposition and conduct of the Lord toward us. It changes our dispositions and feelings toward Him, and so makes it *seem* as if He had changed His disposition and feelings toward us. It opens our souls to the reception of His mercy, love, and forgiveness, and so causes Him to appear—or, we may say, *makes* Him, *in relation to ourselves*, more merciful, loving, and forgiving. It works no absolute change in the Lord, but a change in our own souls. It places us in a new attitude toward Him and in a more intimate relation to Him. It opens the interiors of our minds to a freer influx of His love and wisdom; and so causes it to *appear* as if He actually felt differently and acted differently toward us from what He would have felt and acted had we never prayed to Him.

God's gifts to men, *all* His gifts, are bestowed upon certain conditions. And it is impossible for men to receive them without complying with the conditions. You desire an increase of physical strength and vigor.

Well, exercise your muscular force regularly, and within the bounds of moderation, and your physical strength and vigor will increase. You desire certain kinds of perfume in your garden, or fruit in your orchard. But the only way to secure them is to plant the flowers and trees that produce the desired perfume and fruit, and bestow upon them the care and culture which their nature requires. Or you desire a field of corn, and pray the Lord that He will grant it you. But will He, unless you prepare the soil and plant the corn at the proper time, and weed and tend it according to the requirements of its nature? And then you ask the Lord to thresh and grind your corn and make the flour into bread. But He will do neither of these except upon certain conditions; and one of the conditions is, that He have your intelligent and active co-operation, that you do your part of the work.

And so, precisely, in regard to God's richer gifts to man, the precious and immortal gifts of heaven. These, too, are never bestowed—for in their nature they cannot be—except upon certain conditions. And one of the conditions is, that we recognize them as belonging exclusively to the Lord, and humbly but earnestly ask for them. And this is prayer. The graces of heaven are never given to any but to those who sincerely desire them, for only such are able to receive them. Therefore the Lord says, "Ask, and it shall be given you," and "Every one that asketh, receiveth."

True, sincere, and earnest prayer, then, offered by humble, penitent, and believing hearts; prayer for such things as the Lord has to bestow, the truth and purity and innocence of heaven, the only things which it is proper for immortal beings to pray for—such prayer is always sure to prevail. Not a single petition nor an occasional petition, but prayer offered regularly, every day, as we take our daily food—every hour, in the secret closet of the heart—prayer become the habit of the soul, not the mere babble of the lips—is as sure to be answered as bodily health and vigor are sure to follow obedience to the laws of health. And the reason is obvious; for it is in the nature of true prayer to operate upon the interiors of the mind of him who prays. It is in its nature to open those inner avenues of the soul, through which flow the light and warmth of the upper spheres. The Lord is always ready, waiting, to impart the influence of His blessed Spirit to all who sincerely desire it and will comply with the conditions on which it is offered. He is more willing to grant His Holy Spirit to them that ask it, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children.

Pray often for power to conquer the evil propensities of your heart, and new strength will be given you day by day. Pray for strength against temptation, and your soul shall be opened more and more to the Lord's renewing grace, and the tempter's power over you will gradually diminish. When your path seems dark and dismal, pray that God will shine upon it, and the light of His countenance shall guide you. When a wilderness of doubt and difficulty is before you, and you know not which way to turn, look to the Lord Jesus Christ in humble, earnest prayer, and He shall be to you a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. When you go to your daily duties, pray that God's spirit may go with you and shield you from the tempter's snare, and keep you diligent and kind and just and faithful, and the coveted blessing will not be withheld. If, in your families, your business, your social relations, you have peculiar trials—trials of temper and forbearance and patience—pray that God will give you grace to bear them in a gentle and becoming spirit, and your prayer will certainly be answered. Pray for a blessing on your enemy, if you have one such ; and the very petition, if sincere and earnest, shall soften and sweeten your heart toward that enemy, and so bring down a blessing on yourself. Pray for the prosperity of any righteous cause, and your petition (if sincere) will assuredly be answered in this if in no other way : it will open your soul to a fresh influx of God's grace, and bind your heart more indissolubly to that cause. Pray that liberty and justice may be upheld and prospered, and your heart shall become more strongly wedded to liberty and justice. Pray that oppression and wrong may be overthrown, and your soul shall be filled with a deeper hatred of oppression and wrong. Pray for the poor, the sick, the helpless, the sorrowing, and you shall grow more and more into sympathy with such, and your heart be imbued with a broader, sweeter, and tenderer humanity. Pray for the oppressed, the downtrodden, the enslaved, and your prayers, oft-repeated, shall open within you the gates of heaven, through which the Lord will shed down His grace upon you more abundantly, making you more tender and pitying like Himself, making you feel more and more the wrongs of others to be your own, and nerving you with new courage and resolution and strength to do your part toward breaking their bands asunder and lifting them out of their bondage and oppression.

And thus it is that true and sincere prayer—prayer for all that is just and pure and righteous among men, prayer that the Lord's kingdom of truth and love may be established and built up here on earth—is certainly and forever answered. For such prayer tends, by an unfailing law, to bind the affections of the petitioner more strongly to the things of His kingdom. Such prayer, become habitual, is among the divinely appointed means of opening our souls to a freer influx from the Lord, drawing us into closer fellowship with Him, and renewing us after His own divine likeness. And this is the *end* of all prayer, as well as of all doctrine, of all faith, of all obedience. Therefore, says the illumined herald of the New Church:—

> "Man, during his abode in the world, ought not to omit the practice of external worship, for by external worship things internal are excited; and by external worship things external are kept in a state of sanctity, so that internal things can enter by influx. . . . He is also gifted with states of sanctity, though he be ignorant thereof; which states are preserved by the Lord for his use in eternal life; for in the other world all man's states of life return." (A. C. 1618.)

Third. From what has now been said, we may readily understand what things it is proper to pray for, and what is the meaning of the Lord's words when He says: "After this manner therefore pray ye."

People sometimes pray for things which only the natural man longs for, and which, if granted, might not prove a blessing but a curse. And sometimes for things which they know nothing about, and have no right to pray for—things the very mention of which argues strange presumption or gross ignorance of the meaning, nature, and purpose of prayer. In drouth they pray for rain; in floods, for sunshine; in tempest, for calm. Such petitions indicate a very mistaken idea of prayer. They involve or imply two prominent errors: one, that the supreme Ruler of the universe does not always manage things in the wisest and best manner; the other, that His conduct or purpose may be influenced by the prayers of frail and ignorant mortals. Sometimes they pray for temporal prosperity; for success in their worldly schemes; for deliverance from outward calamities, disappointments, losses, pain, sickness, and sudden death. As if our Father in the heavens were not as wise or as good as He might be! Or, as if He did not know what discipline on earth is best adapted to the wants of every soul! Or, as if He would permit any of His children here below to suffer more than is for their eternal good! In reference to all such things as are painful to the natural man, and are, therefore, called calamities, the only prayer which it is proper to offer is, that they may be a means of subduing our wills to the Divine will; that we may learn from them the lessons of wisdom which they are meant to teach.

No, not for the perishable things of time and sense; not for earthly honors, or earthly joys, or earthly prosperity; not for anything pertaining to the kingdoms of this world, shall we pray, if we would fulfil the

Divine injunction, or pray *after the manner* that the Lord enjoins. But we shall pray for the things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven; for the unfading honors that come from God only; for a closer fellowship with Him and the angels; for strength to resist the influences of hell; for the priceless treasures of wisdom and love; for a heart pure, sincere, just, humble, thankful, and unselfish; for a will wholly resigned to the will of the Lord.

Praying thus—not once or twice but habitually—not with the lips merely, but with the heart and life—we may rest assured that God will not fail to answer our prayer. Our minds will be progressively opened toward Him, and He will reveal Himself to us more and more. He will impart unto us day by day the unspeakable riches of His love, causing us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Himself. He will give us that spirit of truth, which in the end will guide us into all truth. Accordingly we read in the Heavenly Arcana:—

> "Prayer, considered in itself, is discourse with God, and at such time a certain internal intuition of those things which are the objects of prayer, to which corresponds a certain similar principle of influx into the perception or thought of the mind of him who prays, so that there is a kind of opening of man's internals toward God; but this with a difference according to man's state, and according to the essence of the thing which is the object of prayer. If the prayer be grounded in love and faith, regarding only celestial and spiritual things as its object and ends, then in the prayer there exists somewhat resembling a revelation, which is manifested in the affection of the person praying, as to hope, consolation, or some internal joy. Hence it is that to pray, in an internal sense, signifies to be revealed." (A. C. 2535.)

"After this manner therefore pray ye." Not, necessarily, in this exact form—not in these precise words—but after the manner enjoined by the spirit of these words. Pray for such things as are here indicated; pray for deliverance from selfish feelings and sinful acts; pray for strength to resist the tempter's power; pray for a devout and humble and forgiving spirit; pray for the coming and upbuilding of the kingdom of heaven within you,—for a will wholly subdued to the will of the Lord. Praying for such things with the heart as well as with the lips, we pray *after the manner* enjoined by the Divine Master. May He help us ever thus to pray.

XXII.

AS IN HEAVEN, SO ON EARTH.

Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.—MATT. VI, 10.

This is a portion of that Divine prayer which the Lord taught His disciples when, condemning the pride, conceit, formalism, and religious ostentation of the Jewish Scribes and Pharisees, He said to His followers: "Be not ye therefore like unto them." Make no ostentatious display of your piety or your alms-giving. Do nothing for the sake of showing to other people how good, how benevolent, or how religious you are. Sound no trumpet before you, in the synagogue or in the street. Let your alms be in secret. Do no religious act to be seen of men. Utter no long prayers. Yet pray; pray in the secret, silent depths of your hearts, where dwelleth forever the prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God, the all-seeing, all-wise, and ever-loving Father. The hypocrites love to pray standing in the synagogues and at the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Not so with my disciples—with those who would come and learn of me. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." But avoid long prayers. "Use not vain repetitions," as if you expected to make an impression on the infinitely wise and loving Father, or propitiate His favor by your much speaking. This is a mistake—an utterly heathenish idea and practice. But after this manner pray ye.

And then comes that divinely perfect form of prayer, so free from vain repetitions, so grand in its simplicity, so brief yet so comprehensive; accommodated, in its literal sense, even to a little child's understanding, yet so broad and deep and rich in heavenly wisdom that the highest angels can never take in all its meaning. And in this prayer occur the words of our text: "Thy kingdom come," etc.

Every Sunday when we meet for social worship, every morning when we gather around the family altar, we utter on bended knees this beautiful, this Divine petition. At least we pray this prayer with our lips; and if we do not pray it with our hearts at the same time, we do not pray it in secret—in our closets. And how much, then, do we differ from the hypocrites of old? Or how can we expect the Father's promised reward?

It is a great thing that we ask, when we offer this petition, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven," etc. The tongues of men or of angels can ask no richer boon. Yet rich as it is, it is the very boon which the Lord forever longs to bestow on all His children. The very things He has taught us to pray for are the things which He knows will exalt us most—will bless us most—and which He, therefore, as a wise and loving Father, is at all times most willing and anxious to give us. But these things He cannot force upon us; He cannot compel us to receive them; He cannot give them to us without our consent and voluntary co-operation. And this is what He is perpetually striving after,—to bring us into a state to receive the love and joy and peace which He longs to give us. Hence the threatenings, the remonstrances, the warnings in His Word. Hence His gracious promises, too—his earnest invitations and tender entreaties. Hence the trials and disappointments and sorrows and sufferings of this sublunary sphere; the frequent and sore bruisings of the natural heart; the wreck of worldly fortunes and the blasting of earthly hopes. Hence all that varied and sometimes severe discipline of life,—a discipline adapted with infinite wisdom and unutterable love and tenderness to each one's state and need.

Yes, friends, our heaviest sorrows and sorest bereavements are but blessings in disguise. They are among the means whereby the blessed Lord, whose wisdom as well as love is infinite, seeks to break up the fallow ground of the unregenerate heart and prepare it for the reception of heavenly treasures—for the reception of His own purity, justice, tenderness, and love. Yes: if the All-wise and loving Father disappoints or bruises us, it is that He may thereby draw us nearer to Himself; make us see the vanity and emptiness of that on which our supreme affections are fixed, and so be led to fix them on things eternal—the everlasting principles of truth and love and justice, for these are from Him, and are, indeed, Himself; it is that we may open to Him the door of our hearts, and be made willing that He should come and reign supreme within us.

"Thy kingdom come." So pray we all on each returning Sabbath and every new-born day. The kingdom of Queen Victoria, or of Great Britain, is wherever the government of that country is established; wherever its sovereignty is acknowledged and its laws obeyed. So with every earthly monarch or kingdom. Therefore, the Lord's kingdom is wherever His sovereignty is acknowledged and His laws obeyed,—in every heart, in every community, in every state, in every church, that conforms to the Divine requirements.

The laws of the Lord's kingdom are the laws He has established for the government and best welfare of human souls. They are the laws of our heavenly, which is our highest or truly human life; the laws of angelic love and justice, summarily expressed in those two great commandments on which, we are told, hang all the law and the prophets. These laws are all contained in the Word of the Lord. When, therefore, the Lord is acknowledged by any individual as the supreme Ruler and Lawgiver, and when the laws of heavenly charity revealed in His Word are accepted as His laws, and begin to be reverently obeyed, then His kingdom has come, or at least has begun to be established in that soul. And the better these laws come to be understood, and the more reverently they are heeded, the more absolute is the Lord's reign in that soul, and the more fully is His kingdom established there. But simply to understand the laws of the Lord and to recognize our obligation to obey them is not enough. We are not loyal subjects of His kingdom, and His kingdom, therefore, has not really come to us until we reverently obey these laws.

And as it is with an individual, so is it with communities, states, and nations. The Lord's kingdom comes here only when human legislation accords with the Divine law ; when the interests and rights of all—of the poorest and weakest as well as of the richest and most powerful—are alike respected and secured ; when the everlasting principles of love and justice are organized into human institutions and noble industries, and the highest development and culture and happiness of every human being are sought as the chief end.

And we should not forget that the natural as well as the spiritual world is under the government of God ; that the laws of the body are not less divine than those of the soul ; that this kingdom of nature is the Lord's, as well as the kingdom of heaven ; that the appetites, passions, and propensities, even of the natural man, are all good and right in themselves, requiring only to be duly restrained, regulated, and governed by the revealed laws of the higher or heavenly life. So that, when the golden era which saints have longed for and prophets have foretold shall have arrived, when the Lord's kingdom shall have fully come to this our earth, it will be seen that He in His essential Divinity dwells not apart from or above nature, but within it as its ever-present and all-animating soul ; and that not His abstract and incomprehensible Divinity merely, but His Divine Natural Humanity, is the proper object of man's supreme love and adoration.

" Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

This, too, is a part of our daily prayer, the utterance of our lips at least. I trust it expresses the sincere and earnest desire of all our hearts. How is God's will done in heaven? Do we know this? Yes; or may know it if we will read the revelations that have been made concerning heaven.

We know how the Lord's will is done in heaven; for He has graciously revealed the character and conduct and condition of the angels, and all the denizens of heaven are called angels. In His Word He has revealed the principles and laws of angelic life; and in His later revelation, given for the establishment and upbuilding of a new and more glorious state of human society, He has shown us how these laws are fulfilled and what is their final issue in the heaven of angels.

According to this revelation the angels are all images and likenesses of the Lord Himself. They are all filled and animated by His Spirit. Their hearts all pulsate with His unselfish love. Like Him, they seek not their own glory or their own good, but the highest welfare and happiness of each other. Their supreme delight is in doing and giving; for each one in heaven loves others better than himself, and is in the constant effort to do for others; and the more he strives to do for and bless others, the more does he receive of the Lord's love, and the more is his own soul vivified, enlightened, and blessed. Swedenborg, the chosen servant of the Lord, had himself an experience of this when intromitted into heaven. "I observed," he says, on one occasion, "that when I wished to transfer all my delight to another, there flowed in continually a delight more interior and full in place of the former; and the more intensely I desired to do this, the more abundant was the influx of this delight; and this I perceived to be from the Lord" (H. H. 413); thus demonstrating, experimentally, the truth of the Lord's words, "Give, and it shall be given unto you"—"With the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again."

The denizens of heaven do not all *think* precisely alike on every subject; yet their hearts are all wedded to each other, like the members of a loving, happy family, or like the various organs of the human body. Unselfish love is the very life-current of all their souls; and this love seeks and finds constant expression in their good works or varied industries, in whose faithful performance each one there finds his supreme delight.

Nor are the angels proud of what they know or do or are, though their wisdom is so exalted. But they are humble as little children. They perceive and acknowledge and love to acknowledge that their love and wisdom, as well as their power and disposition to do, are not their own, but are goods every moment granted them by the Lord. They have no desire to lead themselves, but in all they think and purpose and do to be led entirely by the Lord. (H. H. 278.)

This will give us some idea of the Lord's will toward the children of men; of how that will is done in heaven, and how He desires that it should be done on earth. Think of what human society here would be, as compared with what it now is, were this Divine petition fulfilled. Think of individuals, communities, and states all animated by the Lord's unselfish love;

all striving to the utmost of their ability to instruct and encourage and help each other; all exercising their powers of body and of mind in a healthy way and in their chosen vocation, not from a selfish love of gain or glory, but from a sincere desire to be useful; all humble, yet cheerful and joyous as little children; all contented—thankful for what they are permitted to do, and for what the Lord is pleased to give them of the things of this world, be it little or much; all looking upward and reverently asking to be led by Him, and seeking their neighbor's welfare even more earnestly than their own; all just and kind and tender and gentle and industrious and patient like the Lord Himself. This would be the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ exemplified. This would be heaven come down to earth. This would be the fulfilment of the petition, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." And toward this glorious consummation the Lord is perpetually working. Through cloud and storm as through sunshine and calm, through trial and sorrow and loss and bereavement, through the conflict of ideas and the shock of contending armies, through the overthrow of dynasties and the wreck of empires, He is forever seeking to usher in His own blessed kingdom of love and peace; forever working toward the fulfilment of the petition, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

Are we working with Him? Do we mean what we say when we repeat this Divine petition? Does this express the sincere desire of our hearts? We may know, if we will look at ourselves away from church—alone, in our ordinary week-day dress—at our accustomed calling. Then and there is where the heart's real petitions leak out. If in the parlor, in the kitchen, in the shop, in the school-room, in the bank, in the counting-house, on the street, at the bench, the last, the anvil, or the printing-press, whatever post has been assigned us through the providence of the Lord,—we are daily and hourly striving to *practise* the laws of the heavenly kingdom as we understand them; to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with the all-wise One who seeth in secret, then are we really praying the prayer in our text. We are daily and hourly weaving its Divine threads into the fabric of our spiritual being. We are ultimating its essential spirit in our outward lives. We are letting it shine out in our looks and tones and words and deeds of justice, kindness, and of love. We are praying it both inwardly and outwardly, praying it within our hearts and with our hands—yea, at the very tips of our fingers. And while thus we pray, the petition cannot fail to find its fulfilment in our own souls, however it may fail of its fulfilment elsewhere. To the world within us, if not in the world without, His kingdom will come—has come already; and His will as revealed to our consciousness is being daily ultimated in our outward lives; done in the external or earth as it is done in the internal or heaven of our minds. For to every mind there is both an internal and an external; the internal is the heaven and the external is the earth.

XXIII.

THE TEN VIRGINS.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom, etc. – MATT XXV, 1–14

In the Sacred Scripture the Lord is often called the Bridegroom and Husband; while heaven and the church are called his wife and bride. As in Isaiah: "Thy Maker is thy Husband; the Lord of hosts is His name." And in Jeremiah: "I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord." And in the Revelations, the New Jerusalem, by which is meant the Lord's church on earth and in heaven, is repeatedly called "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife." And on one occasion this church was represented before the spiritual vision of John "as a bride adorned for her husband." When the selfishness of the natural heart is subdued and our wills are brought into complete subjection to the will of the Lord, so that in spirit, in purpose, in endeavor, we are united to Him, having no desire for anything contrary to His will, loving Him supremely, and therefore delighting to be led by Him in all things, then we are spiritually conjoined or married to the Lord. We have reached the heavenly state. We have attained to that internal marriage union with our Maker which is the purest and sweetest bliss the human soul can know.

And all are gifted with a capacity for this marriage; for all are gifted with the capacity of knowing and loving the Lord and of becoming conjoined to Him, therefore, by a life conformable to His precepts—just as every virgin or young woman is gifted with the capacity of loving, and therefore of becoming united in marriage with some man. Hence it is that the kingdom of heaven is said to be like unto ten virgins, who, taking their lamps, went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

Spiritually regarded, then, we are all of us virgins—doing, or getting ready to do, the very things recorded of the virgins in this parable. We are taking our lamps and going forth, or preparing to go forth, to meet the Bridegroom. For we are learning truths from the Word, and have been learning them as far back as we can remember; and by *lamps* are denoted truths.

But the virgins in the parable were not all alike. They were not all equally sensible or prudent. They did not all make the same careful preparation for meeting the Bridegroom. "Five of them were wise, and five were foolish." The number *ten* means all; and *five* signifies some or a portion. *We*, all of us, belong to one or the other of these classes—to the five wise or the five foolish virgins; and to which is a pretty important question for each one to determine so far as he is himself concerned. In what consisted the wisdom of the one class and the foolishness of the other is plain from what follows:—

"They that were foolish took their lamps but took no oil with them." Lamps are for holding oil; and they are of little use for any other purpose. Without oil the lamps will give no light; and we might as well be without them as with them, so far as any real service they may be to us. So is it with truths (to which *lamps* correspond) when destitute of the good of charity, which is what is signified by *oil.* Truths in the understanding, which have never been vitalized, which have never been religiously applied to life, and thus united to or filled with the oil of charity, are mere empty vessels. Those who have them, and who expect with these alone to attain to the heavenly state, are relying for salvation on faith alone. They belong to the class of foolish virgins mentioned in the parable, "who took their lamps, and took no oil with them." While those who are careful to apply to life the truths they understand, whereby they receive into their hearts the good of love or charity, whereof truths are the containing vessels, they are the wise virgins of whom it is said: "But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." Their, taking of oil, or filling and vitalizing the truths in their understanding through a religious obedience to their requirements, is the evidence of their wisdom. For truth alone makes no one wise. True wisdom consists of goodness united to truth, or charity united to faith. All, therefore, who obey the truths they know, and who in that way fill and vitalize them with the good of charity, are taking oil in their vessels with their lamps. They are the wise virgins.

"While the Bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept." That *full* union of the souls of the righteous with the Lord, which is meant by the heavenly marriage, and from which results the happiness of heaven, does not and cannot take place until after our term of life on earth is ended. Nor does that complete disjunction or alienation of the unrighteous from Him, which is meant by their judgment or their resurrection unto damnation, take place till after death. It is then that the heavenly Bridegroom comes to the souls of all in an eminent sense—conjoining the good more closely to Himself, and separating the evil more thoroughly from Him. And till that time He is said to *tarry*. And while He tarries, *i. e.*, during our life on earth, both the good and the evil are in a state of comparative obscurity in regard to their internal quality. Neither class can see themselves, or judge of their own spiritual condition, as well as they will be able to after their entrance into the other world. Here all are in more or less obscurity, in a state of comparative slumber. And at death they awake from that slumber. They are ushered into a realm of clearer light or deeper darkness, according to their own interior characters. Therefore the herald of the New Church says:—

> "The senses of those in heaven are far more exquisite than they were in the world; that is, they see and hear more perfectly and also think more wisely; for they see by the light of heaven, which exceeds by many degrees the light of the world; and they hear by a spiritual atmosphere, which also surpasses by many degrees the atmosphere of the earth. The difference between these external senses is like the difference between a clear sky and a dark mist, or between the light of noon-day and the shade of evening. For since the light of heaven is divine truth, it enables the sight of the angels to perceive and discriminate the minutest objects. Their external sight also corresponds to their internal sight, or their understanding; for with the angels one sight flows into the other and they act

as one. Hence their wonderful acuteness of vision. In like manner also their hearing corresponds to their perception, which is both of the understanding and the will; hence in the tone and the words of the speaker they perceive the minutest particulars of his affection and thought,—in his tone, the things which belong to his affection, and in his words, the things which belong to his thought. . . . The state of those who are in hell is also widely different from their state in the world; for in the degree that the external and internal senses with the angels in heaven are excellent and perfect, in like degree are they imperfect with those in hell." (H. H. 462; see also 506.)

Thus we may see what is meant by this part of the parable, which says: "While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept."

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." *Midnight* is the point of time where one day closes and a new day begins. It therefore denotes the close of one state and the commencement of another, for *day* denotes state. And the close of our term of existence here on earth, and our entrance upon a new stage of being in the other world, is pre-eminently, therefore, the midnight. And as by the death of the body all are introduced into a more interior realm of being, into a realm nearer to the Lord, the great central Sun of the spiritual world, whose beams reveal more clearly than ever before the internal and real character of each one, therefore at death, or immediately after, the Lord comes to every soul in an eminent sense. He comes with His great revealing light, to disclose to each one his real character, to make manifest his ruling love, to show him what he is spiritually, and where in the spiritual world he properly belongs. Hence the cry at midnight, according to the parable, was: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." And with this cry comes also the command: "Go ye forth to meet Him."

This command is a law—a law as fixed and unalterable as death itself. At death every one goes forth from his clay tenement—his earthly tabernacle—into the spiritual world, a living, thinking, reasoning being in human form; and soon after death his inmost thoughts and feelings go forth and reveal themselves in words and actions with a freedom that they had never known before. His life's love, his ruling purpose, goes forth. All disguises are laid off, all shams, all simulations of righteousness, all mere pretense of piety or charity; and the spirit goes forth from underneath all the specious coverings which self-love may have cunningly woven around him on earth and reveals himself as he really is. It is the coming of the Bridegroom that strips off all deceptive appearances, penetrates all disguises, and compels every soul to come forth as he really is and show himself in his true character. And this coming takes place at the close of our earthly existence, or when we enter the spiritual world. Then is the midnight when the cry is heard—for such is the unalterable law of Divine order—"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet Him."

"Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." All made ready to meet the Bridegroom. All expected to go in with Him to the marriage. It is among the teachings of the New Church that all who are principled in the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, and all who have truth in the understanding, but are without the good of charity, confidently expect that they will be received into heaven. And this expectation often becomes very strong at the hour of death; their hope of heaven is elevated as they enter the other world, so that they are very confident they shall be admitted. This expectation, or this elevation of their hope and confidence, is signified by the words of the parable: "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps."

But where the truth understood has not been religiously obeyed, where there is no true charity or neighborly love, there is no genuine faith. The truths which have been apprehended by the intellect, or merely stored up in the memory, are but empty vessels, lamps without oil. And this every one discovers soon after he enters the other world, if not before. Agreeably to this, therefore, we read in the next verse: "And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out." There is no interior illumination of the soul—there can be none—where there is nothing of the life of charity, no genuine love of the neighbor. This is the oil which feeds the lamp of faith and keeps it brightly burning. Without any of this oil, without any love of truth, justice, sincerity, rectitude, for their own sake, without any religious obedience to the truths of heaven which we have learned, whereby alone they can be made of our life, these truths gradually lose for us all their brilliancy, even in this world. They fade out from the memory. Their brightness becomes dimmed by the smoke of selfish and evil loves, the smoke of the abyss. They cease to shine as they did when first they dawned upon our vision. And at last we see in them no brightness or beauty to admire, so that even here on earth the lamps of all the foolish virgins are steadily *going out.* And after death the truth bursts upon them in all its dreadful solemnity—the truth expressed in the words of the parable, "for our lamps are gone out."

"But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves." Not so, not according to the desire of the foolish virgins. The good of charity cannot be communicated after death to those who have hoped to be saved by faith alone, who have nothing but empty truths. Each one has and can have only so much of the good of love as he has procured to himself by obedience to the laws of love. The good of one class cannot then be communicated or conjoined to the truths of another. Each can have only so much good as he has made his own by actual life, by shunning evils as sins against God. And the wise perceive this. Hence their answer to the foolish virgins, who importuned them for oil. They could not give it them; each must go and buy for himself. Boundless as is the Lord's love, and intensely as He desires to communicate it to the children of men, He can only give it in the measure that we are prepared to receive. And so is it with the angels, who are likenesses of Himself. Therefore the wise are represented as saying to the foolish virgins that they must go and buy oil for themselves.

And they did so. But what was their idea of going and buying for themselves? It was the idea of self-merit. They went in thought over all the outwardly good acts they had ever performed, on account of which they then thought they had earned an admittance into heaven. They thought of how they had relieved the needy, fed the poor, clothed the naked, attended church, read the Word, prayed, contributed to philanthropic institutions, and the like. And by these good outward acts they thought they had merited heaven. This was the oil they went to buy for themselves, not the oil that feeds the lamp of faith and keeps it burning with undimmed luster, not the good of true neighborly love, which comes only from shunning evils as sins against God, but the good of self-merit, a mere outward good, but inwardly defiled with the love of self. And when the Lord comes, or when the light of genuine truth, which is Himself, falls upon such good, immediately its true quality is revealed. Nay, in the very act of recounting their meritorious deeds their internal, selfish, anti-heavenly quality is revealed; agreeable to the words: "And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came."

"And they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage." And these were they who had oil in their lamps; who had, by a life according to the truth, *i. e.*, by shunning as a sin whatever the truth condemns, filled and vitalized their truths with the good of charity. All such are internally conjoined to the Lord while they live in this world. And after they enter the other world, and come, as all do, into the state of their interiors, they are more closely conjoined to Him than ever before. They love Him more intensely, and serve Him more faithfully, and experience more fully the ineffable sweetness and delights of His love and of their own souls' union therewith. But none others are ready. None, save those who have oil in their lamps, can go in to the marriage with the heavenly Bridegroom. Against all others the door is shut; not any outward door, but the inner door of the soul; the door that communicates between the heavens and the earth of the mind, or between its internal and external, or its spiritual and natural degrees. This door remains open while we live on earth; but it is shut in the evil after death. And it is in mercy to them that it is shut. If the interior degrees of their minds were opened, and a free influx of the light and warmth, or the wisdom and love, of heaven thereby maintained, they would suffer unutterable tortures. (Read H. H. 54,400.)

And so it was in mercy to the foolish virgins that "the door was shut." It is in mercy to all who have never applied truth to the renovation of their hearts and lives, and so conjoined or filled it with the good of love, that the heavens of their minds are completely closed in the great Hereafter. We can understand, therefore, why, when the other virgins afterward came, "saying, Lord, Lord, open to us," "He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." The Lord is said not to know those who have not, through obedience to His commandments, come into a state of spiritual and vital union with Himself. They do not know Him, for only those really know the Lord who are the free and voluntary recipients of His unselfish love. They know Him from having received and had experience of a spark of His own Divine life. And the more they receive and diffuse of this life the better will they know Him. But others, whose souls have not been brought into such vital union with the Lord, He is said not to know, for they do not know Him.

But as none of us know the time or state when our earthly existence will end and we shall be called to the final judgment, therefore it is the part of wisdom to examine ourselves; to see what is the prevailing temper of our minds, what the ruling purpose of our lives; to see whether we love the right for its own sake, and would do it even to the prejudice of our own temporal interests. Otherwise we are not prepared, we have not oil in our lamps. Hence the injunction in the last verse of the parable: "Watch, therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

XXIV.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL.

And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.—MARK XVI, 15, 16.

These are among the words which our Lord spake to His disciples after His resurrection, when He appeared to them "as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen." He had been seen by the women who came early on Sunday morning to the sepulcher, bringing sweet spices to anoint the body of their crucified Master. He had also appeared to two others "as they walked and went into the country." And they who saw Him told the other disciples, but their words seemed to them like idle tales. They could not believe that He whose departure they mourned—whose body hung in agony on the cross but two days ago, and was yesterday laid in the sepulcher—was still alive, and had been seen of those who mourned and loved Him most. They had not yet comprehended His nature. They did not know that He was immortal as the truth itself. To their carnal conceptions, as to the conceptions of all natural men, this world seemed the only real world, and bodily life the only real life. They were faithless in regard to any world or any life beyond the present.

While they were in this unbelieving state, their Master "appeared to them as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart." As if He had said: "You have seen my miracles; you have listened to my teachings; you have been witnesses of my wondrous power; you have felt the breath of my love. Did you suppose that such wisdom, love, and power as have been displayed by me before your eyes could perish? Did you think that *I* was destroyed, when that body that wrapped me around and veiled my glory hung upon the cross? How could you be so faithless? This unbelief must spring from lack of true life within you, from hardness of heart."

And then He told them to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And the disciples whom the Lord addressed on this as on other occasions represented all His humble followers throughout the world and throughout the ages. All Christians now, of whatever name or creed, who look to the Lord Jesus Christ as their great exemplar and guide, and who are humbly striving to learn of Him, and day by day to follow after Him, are His disciples; for a disciple is simply a pupil or learner. And all such are missionaries—God-appointed and God-ordained priests. They all have a gospel to preach. Yea, they all preach a gospel; for they are mediums to those around them of so much of the Lord's truth and love as they have themselves received. They may not preach the Gospel officially, orally, with their lips; most of them do not. But they preach it by their pure example and righteous lives, which is the most eloquent and powerful kind of preaching. When the spirit of the Lord Jesus is exhibited by us in our common duties and daily intercourse with our fellow-men, when something of His gentleness, meekness, forbearance, and forgiveness, His love of justice and hatred of wrong, His sympathy with the afflicted, and His compassion for the weak and lowly, His devotion to high and holy uses, His self-forgetfulness and self-denial and self-sacrifice for the good of others—when something of this shines forth in our daily lives, then are we, each one in his degree, preachers of the Gospel. We proclaim far more eloquently than words can proclaim the good news concerning the Lord, and the redemption from the thraldom of selfishness and sin which He has wrought within us. We have received an ordination higher than any human hands can confer, and have a divine authority for preaching the Gospel. And our preaching is "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power."

No: Rely upon it, there is no preaching of the Gospel to be compared, in efficacy and quickening power, with the voiceless preaching of an earnest, humble, prayerful, God-fearing, self-denying, self-sacrificing life. By the side of this, the wordy harangues and Sunday exhortations of professional preachers are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

We are all called, then, to be preachers of the Gospel, just as we are all called to be disciples of the Lord.

But in this highest and best sense we can only preach so much of the Gospel as we have ourselves learned; and we have really learned only so much as we have reduced to practice,—only so much as has become incorporated into our mental and moral constitution and been made our own by actual life. The sphere of affection and thought which we have procured to ourselves, and which radiates from us day by day, as heat from the sun or perfume from the flower, is the measure, both in kind and in degree, of the Gospel that we preach.

Then, immediately following the command to go, preach the Gospel, came the words: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." That is, he that believeth the Gospel. And the central figure in the Gospel,—that, indeed, which is the substance and living embodiment of it all,—is the Lord Jesus Christ. Take Him away, and what is the Gospel? A lifeless corpse; a body without a soul. Without the living Christ, or the Lord in His Divine Humanity, there would be no Gospel; for there would be no good news to a world immersed in selfishness and sin of the way of redemption and salvation. He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." And in assuming our corrupt nature,—coming down to us in our fallen and corrupt state, doing, teaching, and suffering all that He did, and thereby glorifying the humanity that He assumed, He has wrought a glorious redemption for mankind. He has revealed Himself as our only God and Saviour, and has shown us what salvation is; what it is that we are to be saved from, and what we must do to be saved. And by the temptations that He endured, and the victories He achieved over the hells, in glorifying the Humanity, He has rendered salvation possible for all who humbly look to Him and reverently obey His instruction. Thus He has opened up a way of salvation for our fallen race, and made that way plain before our eyes. This is the Gospel—the good news to men.

But although the Lord has wrought redemption, and thereby made it possible for all men to be saved, yet all are not certainly saved. None, indeed, are saved without their own co-operation. They must have faith in the Lord, and in the way of salvation that He has opened up and made plain; otherwise they will not look to Him, nor walk in the way that He has pointed out. Thus there can be no salvation from sin and its consequences without faith or belief in the Gospel; and the very sum and substance—yea, the life and soul—of the Gospel is the Lord Jesus Christ, and what He has taught and done and suffered for the salvation of the world. Without a belief in the Gospel we cannot be saved.

Belief, then, is the first thing necessary to salvation. The next thing is baptism. Baptism (I speak of the outward ceremonial rite) is a sign of one's belief in the Gospel,—an open and solemn acknowledgment of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Redeemer and Saviour, and in the way of redemption that He has marked out. And being such a sign, it is proper and orderly, if it has not been administered in infancy or childhood, that it be received in after years as soon as the individual comes to have faith in the Lord and to desire to be regenerated according to the truths of His Word.

The church which immediately preceded the Christian was merely a representative church. Their worship consisted in the scrupulous performance of certain outward ceremonies,—in the sacrifice of rams and of bullocks, in burnt-offerings and drink-offerings, in washings and fastings, and various other external rites. And these outward acts were all significant, though their significance was not understood by the Jews. They were symbolic and divinely appointed representations of true worship—of those offerings of thanksgiving, love, and praise which are laid upon the altar of a true and living church, which go up as sweet incense from the hearts of all those who worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

But when the Lord came into the world, the things which had been typified or foreshadowed in the ceremonial worship of the Jewish church began to blossom forth. Types and shadows were no longer needed, now that the real things typified thereby began to appear. They were as needless as wax flowers when the real flowers are in bloom, or as the picture of a friend when that friend himself is present with you. What need of the shadow when one has the substance? Or of the type, when the thing typified has blossomed forth? Hence it is that the external and ceremonial acts, which were enjoined upon the Jewish nation and were binding upon them before the advent of the Lord, are not now binding upon Christians, to whom internal and spiritual things have been revealed. (See A. C. 9211.) Accordingly our illumined teacher says:—

> "The things contained in the external sense [of the Word in the Old Testament] are not eternal truths, but are things to be observed by the Israelitish nation for the sake of things internal, for they signify these latter things, and thereby involve them; they were also to be kept by that nation before the internal things of the Word were opened by the Lord; and when they were opened then those external things were abrogated. For when man worships the Lord from faith and from love to Him, which are internal things, he has no need of the external things which signify them, for he is then in them and not in their types." (A. C. 10,037.)

Again he says:—

> "As internal things were altogether lost among the Jewish nation, therefore the Lord taught them [by representatives]; yet He abolished the representatives [at the time of His advent], because the greatest part of them had respect to Himself; for the image must vanish when the real thing itself appears. He established, therefore, a New Church, which was not to be led, like the former, by representatives to internals, but which was to know them without representatives. (*Plainly discountenancing representative worship.*) And in the place thereof He enjoined only two external rites, viz., Baptism and the Holy Supper; Baptism as a means whereby regeneration might be had in remembrance, and the Holy Supper as a means whereby remembrance might be had of the Lord and of His love toward the universal human race, and of the reciprocal love of man to Him." (A. C. 4904, T. C. R. 670.)

The literal observance, then, of these two ordinances, or outward representatives of worship, is now enjoined by the Lord. And these two represent, or contain in one complex, all things of the internal church. The observance of the Holy Supper is enjoined by Him where He says, "This do in remembrance of me." And the rite of Baptism is enjoined in the commission which He gave His chosen disciples when He sent them forth to teach all nations and to baptize. (Matt. xxviii, 19.) It should also be remembered that He Himself was baptized of John in the river Jordan; and when "John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" His answer was: "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," Baptism, therefore, as an external rite, being clearly sanctioned and enjoined by the Lord Himself. But what is the use of Baptism as an external rite? Does it wash away any of the stains of guilt or sin? Does it augment our knowledge or our love of the Lord and the things of heaven? Does it make us less selfish or more wise? Does it lessen our sinfulness or increase our saintliness? No; not necessarily. It may, however, like any other act of devotion, help to do this. It may help us in the great work of regeneration. And are there any helps, any means of progress on the way to heaven, which we can afford to dispense with? Do we not need *all* that the Lord has mercifully provided, and does not He know better than we what will help us? And would He prescribe anything that would not be useful?

Then, is there no use in any outward act of worship?—no use in singing, kneeling, or repeating the words of prayer? None whatever, if it be a *mere* form. If we do not pray inwardly, it is of little use for our lips to utter the language of prayer. If our hearts do not bend with reverence before our Lord and Saviour, it is of little use to bend our knees—yea, it is scarcely less than solemn mockery. If there is no sweet melody within, no gratitude or love, or joy in believing, it is of little use for our tongues to utter songs of praise. Yet all these ultimate acts are of great use when engaged in from a sincere desire and earnest purpose. They are among the means of spiritual growth and strength; they help to draw us nearer to the Lord and heaven; they open the interiors of our minds to a freer influx of the things of heaven; they strengthen our faith; they intensify our love; they clarify our perceptions of truth and duty; they confirm our purposes of obedience; and thus they help to purify and exalt, to strengthen and renew, our inner man; they help us on our way to heaven; they help to bind our hearts a little closer to the angels. And so we may see that the ordinance of baptism, when received in a spirit of humble and childlike obedience, is of use, even to those who have no knowledge of its spiritual signification. It serves to strengthen and confirm within their hearts the purpose of obedience.

But in the revelations made for the New Church, the spiritual meaning of baptism is clearly unfolded and the uses of the external rite are distinctly enumerated. They are comprehended under these three: First, "introduction into the Christian church, and at the same time insertion among Christians in the spiritual world;" second, that the person baptized "may know and acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Saviour, and follow Him;" third, "that the man may be regenerated." These are said to be the uses of baptism. Not that the ordinance will surely perform these uses for all who receive it, for we know it does not. We learn from the True Christian Religion "that the hells are full of Satans from men as well baptized as unbaptized." And we know very well that many baptized persons live wicked lives. But the uses above enumerated are its legitimate fruits. They are such uses as are symbolized or shadowed forth by the rite, and such, therefore, as it has a tendency to accomplish. The design and use of this ordinance may be frustrated by the individual receiving it, just as the design and use of the Sacred Scripture may be frustrated by those who read the Scripture. The use of reading it is not disproved, nor its renewing power and efficacy at all invalidated, by the fact that some read it without having their souls renewed thereby, without becoming imbued with its divine and blessed spirit. They are not renewed simply because they fail to obey the instruction in the Word. And so may those who receive baptism fail to receive the blessings which it was designed to confer by failing to do that which is symbolized by the rite. The fault, in case of such failure, is all their own.

It is said that baptism is an introduction, or a *sign* of introduction, into the Christian church, and an insertion among Christians in the spiritual world. In other words, it is a sign that the person baptized is of Christians; and if an adult, it is a sign that he believes in the Christian religion, and desires and purposes to regulate his life according to its precepts. It is not a sign of the present character or quality of the person baptized; not a sign that he is a good Christian or a bad Christian; that his views of Christianity are high or low, correct or erroneous; that his understanding of the Word is right or wrong, according to the letter or according to the spirit. Baptism is not and was never intended to be a sign of any of these things. It is simply the *Christian* sign, recognized as such by men on earth and by spirits in the other world. It is a sign in the spiritual world, whereby those who have received it are distinguished from Mahometans, Pagans, Jews, or people of any other religion than the Christian. (T. C. R. 678.) And we are told that it is important to the peace and order of the moral universe that those of different religions should be kept distinct from each other; and that this distinction could not be effected without some sign, which, among those professing the Christian religion, is baptism.

From this view of the subject it is plain enough, that the validity or efficacy of the rite, so it be administered and received as Christian baptism, is not at all affected by the faith of the administrator or by the special doctrinal views of the church in which it is administered. For it is not, and never was intended to be, a sign whereby to distinguish one sect or denomination of Christians from another. And the attempt to make it such is an attempt to exalt our own intelligence above the wisdom of God, to rob this rite of its broad and catholic significance, and degrade it into a mere sectarian ordinance, into a sign whereby one class of Christians is distinguished from another. Such is not the teaching of the Divine Word, not of the Heavenly Doctrines on this subject.

"The second use of baptism," we are told, "is that the Christian may know and acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Saviour, and follow Him." It is itself, on the part of the person receiving or asking it, a solemn form of acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Saviour, and his desire and purpose to follow Him. And the purpose thus solemnly expressed is thereby rendered stronger, and the acknowledgment more full and complete. For is not every desire and purpose of the heart strengthened by being expressed in some outward form—some ultimate act? And thus we may see how baptism tends to the accomplishment of this second use.

And the third and final use is, "that the man may be regenerated." That is to say, regeneration is the *end* for which this ordinance was instituted and enjoined. This is the spiritual meaning of baptism. Spiritual baptism is the washing away of the soul's pollution by means of the water of life, the truth of the ever-living Word. For it is only by means of truth from the Word—truth received, understood, and religiously obeyed—that our selfish and evil inclinations can be overcome and the heart cleansed of its natural defilements. And this washing and cleansing of our inner man by means of truth from the Word, that blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, this renewal of the heart through the rejection and removal of its evil loves, is regeneration. This is spiritual baptism, and is what the natural rite corresponds to and signifies. This is that interior baptism, effected by the operation of the Divine Spirit upon the mind and heart, a baptism which, it is said, cometh *after* that of John (the baptism by water) and is "with the Holy Spirit and with fire." "Therefore," we are told, "when baptism is performed, read in the Word and named, the angels who are present do not understand baptism, but regeneration; wherefore by these words of the Lord, 'whosoever believeth and is baptized, shall be saved,' is understood by the angels in heaven that he who acknowledges the Lord and is regenerated will be saved." (T. C. R. 685.) Regeneration is salvation; for it is the renewal of our inner spiritual life, the cleansing of the heart from impure and selfish loves, and thus the deliverance of the soul from its state of bondage to sin and Satan, a state of spiritual death.

But there can be no regeneration without an acknowledgment of the Lord, or without belief in Him as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." And without regeneration, what are we, and where are we? Supremely selfish, keeping company with evil spirits; ignorant of the soul's exalted capabilities as well as its true bliss; dead to the delights of heavenly life; no love of the Lord or the neighbor in the heart; lost to the dignity and nobleness of true manhood; full of bitterness and hate and envy and scorn and blasphemy. This is where and how the unbeliever will find himself at last. And if this be not damnation, what is? Verily, therefore, is it said, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

XXV.

CHEERFULNESS A RELIGIOUS DUTY.

Thou wilt show me the path of life. In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.—PSALMS XVI, 11.

Life is love—pure, unselfish love. And as God is love itself, therefore He is life itself. He is the only Life, and therefore the only fountain of Love. All the love there is in the hearts of men and angels is from Him; and thus all life is from Him. (Without love we should not truly live. Even self-love is from Him, but His love perverted. It corresponds to heat, without which nothing can exist.) True life is pure love, disinterested love, the love of others out of itself, the love that never thinks of recompense, the love that finds its highest gratification in doing whatsoever blesses others, the love that is its own exceeding great reward, that pours itself forth ungrudgingly, as flowers pour forth their sweet perfume or the sun its kindling rays, that doeth good and lendeth, hoping for nothing again. Such is the nature of the Lord's love. And all who receive and cherish this unselfish love become the children of God—likenesses of the Heavenly Father. They live in the Lord, and the Lord in them; for they live in the reception and exercise of His love, and His love dwells with operative energy in them. As saith the loving and beloved Disciple: "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him." And we truly live only in the degree that we live in the reception and exercise of God's own life unperverted—in the exercise, that is, of His unselfish love; for then we live in Him and from Him. This is something more than mere animal or corporeal life: it is true human life; it is heavenly life—life everlasting; it is the kind of life that the angels enjoy—for they all love the Lord supremely, and love others even better than themselves. Their life, therefore, is, in its nature, similar to the Lord's life.

But this is very different from the life that man receives by inheritance; for his ruling hereditary love is selfish,—the very opposite of the love that rules in heaven. Therefore he must lose this selfish hereditary life for the Lord's sake; that is, for the sake of that superior human life which the Lord longs to give, and which He has made us all capable of receiving. In other words, he must undergo a thorough spiritual renovation. He must experience that change in the quality of his ruling love which is signified by being born again, and without which, it is said, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Without this inward transformation he cannot enter the kingdom of God, because this kingdom is within and consists essentially in noble and unselfish purposes prompting to a life of active usefulness—in love to the Lord and the neighbor.

And the *path* or *way* leading to this life is a spiritual way, for the life is spiritual life. It is the way of the divine commandments, the way of truth and righteousness, the way of self-denial, self-conflict, self-renunciation, and self-crucifixion. This is the way and the only way to the attainment of true heavenly life. And this way the Lord never fails to point out to all who sincerely desire to know it in order that they may walk therein. Yes; the way of God's commandments is the only way to heaven—the true life of the soul. And this way the Lord makes very plain to such as are willing to walk in it; willing, that is, to *keep* His commandments by shunning as sins whatever they forbid. This is the way that the Divine Saviour Himself trod, the way in which He conquered the hells, expelled or subjugated the evils of His maternal humanity, and so glorified it or united it to the essential Divinity, even the Father. Therefore He says: "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love." And, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Sometimes we are placed in circumstances in which we cannot see clearly just which way we ought to go or precisely what we ought to do. But if it be our sincere desire and earnest prayer to do right, and if we look to the Lord in humble, confiding faith, and pray Him to keep us from doing our own will, and to lead us in the right way, He will in due time make the path of duty plain. He will, through potent but invisible agencies, determine our minds, and ultimately our action, in the way that He sees to be best. To the humble and prayerful and faithful He never fails to show the path of life—the path that leads onward and upward to that blissful state of full conjunction with Himself, in which the soul is bathed and flooded with the Divine Love as with eternal sunshine.

"In Thy presence is fulness of joy." Life—true life—is ever joyful. And the nearer people are to the Lord, the more they are like Him in the spirit and temper of their minds, the more they receive and give forth of His disinterested love, the more joyful they are. And joy is gladness, joy is delight of heart, joy is exultation, cheerfulness—a certain gayety of spirit opposed to sadness, melancholy, and gloom. It manifests itself in cheerful words and smiling looks and a certain exuberance of spirit, as if the soul were overflowing with love and gladness. See it in the sparkling eyes, laughing faces, and lively manner of little children, their very feet dancing as if keeping time to the joyous music within them.

Joy, then, with all its accompaniments—smiling looks, pleasant words, cheerful tones and manner—is a characteristic of heavenly life; though we must not infer that where these outward indications exist there is always true joy, heavenly life, within. This does not follow any more than it follows that underneath every beautiful face in this world there dwells a beautiful spirit. Yet it remains true that joy—manifesting itself in cheerful looks, tones, words, and actions—is a characteristic of heavenly life; while sadness—manifesting itself in somber looks, melancholy tones and words, and a corresponding manner—is a characteristic of infernal life. Love, true love, is full of joy. But self-love is sad, gloomy, and sullen. Therefore in heaven all is bright and cheerful; for the sunshine of God's love that warms all hearts, irradiates all faces and all surrounding objects with its own unspeakable brightness; while in hell, where self-love rules supreme, all is dark and dismal. The sunshine of God's love is not there; and the only light by which they see is a dull, lurid, flickering flame arising from self-love, which in itself is real darkness.

One of the marked differences between the Old and the New theology is to be seen in the different views inculcated and encouraged by the two systems respectively in regard to cheerfulness and whatever tends to promote it.

My own earliest thoughts or ideas of religion were such as I drank in from the reigning theology round about me half a century ago. And they were sad and gloomy indeed. To my mind's eye, God was pictured as an awful Being, a Being without love or tenderness or pity, an almighty tyrant, whose wrath was to be deprecated and warded off and His favor propitiated by certain outward professions of religion, accompanied by certain penances, such as the repression of all laughter and gayety and the abstaining from all kinds of amusement. Not one gleam of love do I remember at that time to have seen radiating from the Heavenly Father's face. Religion became associated in my mind with all that was sad and melancholy—gloomy and repulsive faces, abstinence from all amusements, a despotic and angry God, arbitrary and revengeful, hating all the unconverted and delighting in their torment. This I learned both from the preaching I heard and from the pious people I saw around me. It was wicked to play, it was wicked to dance, it was wicked to sing unless you sang psalms; it was wicked to do almost anything that youthful hearts delight in doing; it was not properly *religious* to do anything but read the Bible, pray, attend church, go to prayer-meetings, and sing sacred songs. (This was half a century ago—a great change has taken place since then.)

The New Theology presents religion under a totally different aspect. It teaches us that the Lord is Love itself, and that His love in its very nature is cheerful, gladsome, joyous. And as He delights to impart His own life unto others, the creatures whom He has made capable of receiving it, so He delights to see them cheerful and glad. He delights in the playfulness, the pastimes, and the smiles of men and women, and in the innocent sports, gayety, and laughter of little children; nay, it is His nearness to little children, and His own love in their hearts, that makes them so joyous and full of laughter. He has filled the created universe with smiles and gladness, for Himself is in all the works of His hands. The sunshine—how cheerful and smiling that is. It makes the heart leap for joy to behold it after a succession of cloudy days. The landscape, too, is full of smiles as the hearts of little children are of love and gladness. The field and the forests, whether arrayed in their vernal bloom or crowned with the fruits of autumn, seem ever joyous. As saith the inspired Psalmist: "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." Even the stars by night have a merry twinkle which reminds us of the joy that reveals itself in the sparkle of bright young eyes. The *sounds* of nature, too, the song of birds, the hum of insects, the gurgle of running waters, are cheerful and joyous. And the colors of all the sweetest and loveliest things of nature, as of birds and flowers and precious stones, are indicative of gladness. The motions, also, of animated nature speak the same language. They are outward signs of an inward joy. Especially is this the case with fishes, birds, and insects. Speaking of the latter, a recent and charming writer says: "Insects, above all the minor creatures, seem to relish life. . . . To take special instances, however, of the enjoyment given to insects, and thus of the benevolence of Him who ordains all these good things, let us cite the dancing gnats. Every one has noticed, in calm summer evenings, what vast multitudes of these little creatures thus disport themselves. They may be traced, while the light wanes, till the eye can follow no further, and as the motions evidently serve no purpose of sustenance or of reproduction, it cannot be doubted that the object is purely one of pleasure. . . What can be more beautiful than the gayety and frolic of butterflies in the air? They frisk about, ascending, descending, moving in every possible direction, performing zig-zag pirouettes of the most elegant and varied kind, just as kittens do when upon the ground in their more clumsy but not less sportive gambols. Here, again, there is no purpose of direct physical utility subserved; the movements are all tokens and expressions of pleasure." (Grindon's "Little Things of Nature," p. 42.)

All nature, then, is cheerful and glad. It is hardly a figure of speech to say that sun and stars, birds and insects, fields and woods, fishes and flowers, evermore rejoice and sing for joy. Life is ever joyous. And the higher and truer the life, the greater the cheerfulness, the more abounding the joy, the more intense the delight. And of all created realms of being, the angelic heavens are brightest and fullest of sunshine. And the best of the angels, those who are nearest or most like the Heavenly Father, are, of all others, the most joyous. Innocence is bright and cheerful. Innocence is light-hearted and gay. Innocence is full of joy. The Lord is essential innocence, or Innocence itself; and in His presence "there is fulness of joy." And that other realm of being that is most remote from the Lord, the realm where selfishness reigns supreme, where life is the very opposite to that in heaven, that realm is sad, gloomy, sullen, cheerless. No light-heartedness is there, no buoyancy of spirit, no cheerfulness, no joy; for the sunshine of God's love is not there; innocence is not there; love of the neighbor is not there; the delight which springs from the performance of good uses is not there. No; the state of infernal spirits is one of unspeakable sadness and gloom.

We are all of us, I suppose, sad and gloomy at times, cast down, low spirited, melancholy, for we all inherit a nature that is morally corrupt. We all have our dark and dreary nights, as well as our bright and cloudless days. But it is a great and unspeakable help to know and acknowledge that all melancholy states, all sad and gloomy feelings, are from hell; and all bright and cheerful states, all glad and joyous feelings, from heaven. When this is seen and acknowledged, then to resist and fight against sad feelings, and to cultivate a cheerful disposition, will be perceived and felt as a religious duty. It is as much our duty to resist and endeavor to overcome in ourselves all sad feelings, all tendency to gloom, despondency, and depression of spirits, as it is to resist the tendency to lie, defraud, deceive, or to do any other evil thing forbidden by the divine precepts. Both tendencies are from hell. Both are induced by evil spirits. Both are injurious to ourselves and others. For when we cherish sad and gloomy feelings ourselves, we induce similar feelings in others; our sphere affects those round about us; our sadness is felt by our families, our friends, our neighbors, all, indeed, with whom we have any intercourse, and beclouds their souls more or less, shuts out the sunshine which they might otherwise have received. And thus we take from them something which we have no right to take, something more precious than bodily food or raiment. We rob them, for the time, of the joy which they are capable of receiving and which we might otherwise impart. And so, on the other hand, by cherishing bright and cheerful feelings we confer a blessing on those around us; our own cheerful sphere contributes something toward repressing the sphere of hell and bringing sunshine and cheerfulness into other hearts.

Cheerfulness, then, is to be regarded as a heavenly grace; for it comes down from heaven, where there is fulness of joy. And it will no more thrive and increase without culture than any of the other graces of heaven, no more than honesty, truthfulness, gentleness, patience, forbearance, humility, gratitude, devotion, love, trust. And the first step in the cultivation of cheerfulness is to look upon its opposite as emanating from hell, and to shun its indulgence as a sin. For is it not a sin to cherish sad and despondent feelings, or to make no effort to put them away? And what is the immediate cause or occasion of such feelings? What opens or exposes our hearts to their influx? Generally it is some event that wounds our love of self or love of the world; some disappointment or loss or humiliation or bereavement trying to our natural feelings. And sad and gloomy feelings on account of events over which we have no control, what are they but inward murmurs against the Divine Providence; complaints, audible enough to the ears of listening angels—complaints that the Lord's will is done instead of our own? And is there no wrong, no sin, in the indulgence of such a state as virtually arraigns the benevolence of our Heavenly Father?

If, then, we would cultivate the grace of cheerfulness, our first step should be to regard its opposite as from hell, and to shun its indulgence as a sin; just as our first step in the cultivation of honesty, truthfulness, patience, and other Christian graces is to regard and shun dishonesty, falsehood, impatience, etc., as sins against God. As soon as we come to see and acknowledge that all gloomy and despondent feelings have the same origin as fraud, hatred, malice, or blasphemy, and look to the Lord to enable us to shun their indulgence as a sin, they will begin to take their departure. For evil spirits are no more inclined to remain long in our company after we come to understand their real character, than are evil men.

This first step taken, the subsequent steps will be comparatively easy. Never indulge in melancholy forebodings, for that is to distrust the good providence of the Lord. Never brood over any sorrow, for that is murmuring at the discipline of heaven and taking evil spirits to your embrace. Turn away (or pray the Lord to help you) from all sad and gloomy thoughts, as from the smoke of the abyss. When your sky is murky and the tempest is howling fiercely around you, forget not that your Father's face still beams with love; that the Divine Sun is shining brightly above you, and in due time will disperse the clouds. And when you have learned to shun sadness or its indulgence as a sin, then practise cheerfulness; for this, like every other virtue, increases with practice, just as does fleetness of foot, nimbleness of finger, skill of hand, or strength of arm. Practise it as a religious duty. Practise it every day and everywhere, and in all your intercourse with others. Be cheerful in your family; be cheerful at your work; be cheerful in society; be cheerful when alone. Seek healthful recreation, now and then, of body and of mind. Enter into the innocent pastimes of men and the merry sports of children. Relate amusing anecdotes; listen to lively stories; read pleasant and amusing books; sing, dance, laugh, play (you need not be rude or boisterous); for all this, rely upon it, is well-pleasing to the Lord.

And if at any time sad and despondent feelings begin to invade your breast, do not sit brooding over them, but go out of and try to forget yourself. Call on some friend, and spend an hour or so in pleasant conversation. Visit some sick or unfortunate neighbor, and try to comfort him in his affliction. Help any one that needs help. Go learn some pleasant story, and tell it to some hapless little ones, whom you will find ever eager to listen. Seek, especially, some steady and *useful* occupation, if you have none already, and perform its duties faithfully; for it is hard for gloomy spirits to draw near to those who have useful work to do, and try to do it *honestly and well.* But above all else, and without which all other means of cheerfulness will prove unavailing, be careful to shun all known evils as sins against God, and to perform faithfully and conscientiously all known duties. This is the best, the *only sure* defense against the dark and depressing spheres of hell. This opens the soul to the sunshine of heaven. This brings us near to Him, creates us anew in the likeness of Him, who is the life and soul of all cheerfulness, in whose presence " is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

XXVI.

HOW COULD CHRIST, IF DIVINE, PRAY?

He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.—Luke ix, 28.

Not only did the Lord Jesus Christ teach His disciples to pray, but He often prayed Himself. He went up into the mountain with Peter, James, and John and there prayed. On another occasion "He withdrew into the wilderness and prayed." Again, He said to His disciples as they drew near to a place called Gethsemane, in the Mount of Olives, "Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder." And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He went "and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And "He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Thy will be done." And He prayed for His disciples: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. . . . I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil. . . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word."

Here, now, arises the question—a question so natural that it forces itself upon every thoughtful mind: If Jesus Christ were Himself Divine—the true and only God—as the New Church believes and teaches, how could He pray to the Father as to another and mightier Being than Himself? Did God need to pray?—the Omnipotent ask help from another? And then did He pray to Himself?—ask help from Himself?

Let us see what answer the New Church returns to these very natural questions.

We must bear it perpetually in mind, then, that our Lord, while He tabernacled in the flesh, had both a Divine and a human nature. As to His inmost, He was altogether Divine—was Jehovah God. And when He spoke and acted from His inmost, He spoke the words, did the deeds, and displayed the power and attributes of God. But as to His external—as to that humanity which he derived from the mother Mary, He was altogether human—was like any other man. And when He spoke and acted and suffered in or from His assumed humanity, He spoke and acted and suffered altogether as a man—finite, dependent, and in need of Divine help. And the only point wherein He differed in His external or assumed humanity from other men, was this: He was never overcome of evil; He never yielded in temptation; therefore He knew no sin.

Thus the Lord was, while in the flesh, both Divine and human, perfect God and perfect man. And these two natures were united in Him as spirit and matter are united everywhere, or as the internal and external, or the spiritual and the natural man, are united in one finite individual.

Now in consequence of this union of the Infinite and the finite, of the Divine and the human, in the Person of Jesus Christ, our Lord had, while on earth, two widely different states: one, a state of exaltation or glorification, in which He felt, thought, spake, and acted from His inmost, or as one with the Divine; the other, a state of humiliation, in which He was in the assumed human, and felt, thought, spoke, and acted from that, as any other man would. And He was in these two states alternately, sometimes in one and sometimes in the other. When in His state of exaltation, He had a clear perception and consciousness of His supreme Divinity, of His perfect oneness with the Divine; and could say: "I am the light of the world." "I and the Father are one." "All mine are Thine, and Thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." But when in His lower state, or state of humiliation, He was not conscious of His Divinity, but only of His humanity. He felt all the weaknesses and wants, experienced all the desires and longings, underwent all the temptations, endured all the assaults of evil spirits, that any man feels, experiences, undergoes, and endures. In this state He prayed to the Father, the essential Divine who dwelt in Him from conception, as any man conscious of his human weakness and his need of Divine help may pray to Him. If He had not had these two states, or if He had not at times been in a state of humiliation, and in that state felt, longed, suffered, struggled, prayed as a man, how could He have been an example to us? How could He have taught us by example as well as by precept to pray for the help we need to overcome the powers of darkness? And what meaning would there have been to His words?—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." We can only *follow* (in the spiritual sense) one who has Himself been in all our states of human infirmity, suffering, and need, and who has in some way or by some process risen above or triumphed over them. It would be absurd to speak of our *following* one who had not a nature altogether like our own, and who had not been in or passed through all conceivable human states. Therefore the Apostle saith: "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."

Does what I have said seem unreasonable? Does it seem difficult of comprehension or hard to believe that our Lord, when on earth, was alternately in the two states of which I have spoken?—now in a state of exaltation, or of perfect union with the indwelling Divine, and now in a state of humiliation, or of apparent separation from the Father? Reflect a moment, and you will see that something analogous—yes, the very image of the same thing—occurs with every regenerating man and woman.

For there is an internal and an external, a heaven and an earth, to every finite mind. The internal or heaven is that region where are stored up the remains of goodness and truth; that region into which the Lord first flows with His spirit and life, and where dwell the light and joy and peace of heaven. The external, or earth of the mind, is that inferior region where all the natural feelings, thoughts, passions, and propensities originating in the love of self reside. Now these two regions of the mind, viewed as to the character of the thoughts, or the nature of the life that belongs to them, are antagonistic to each other. They are like two minds directly at war with each other, one desiring and seeking what the other loathes and shuns. And the reason is, that the internal mind, which we call the man's heaven, is that into which heaven flows, that which has never been corrupted or thrown into disorder; and the external or natural mind is that which has been deranged and into which hell flows. This, then, is why they are perceived in us as two antagonistic minds—two opposing wills and understandings—because they are played upon or influenced by two opposing forces, one from heaven and the other from hell. Every man or woman who has taken a single step in the regenerate life has had experience of these two opposing mental forces, one from above and the other from beneath, which *seem* like two conflicting minds. Paul had a vivid perception of them, as we gather from several passages in his writings. Thus he says: "I find, then, a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." And again he says: " For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary one to the other." By the *flesh* here, the Apostle means the external or natural degree of the mind. This is plain from what he afterward says of " the works of the flesh," such as hatreds, wrath, strife, envyings, etc., all of which, we know, are works of the natural or unregenerate mind.

Now, in consequence of this internal and external mind, or this natural and spiritual degree of the mind, every individual who becomes regenerated is alternately in very different states. Sometimes he is in the state of his internal or spiritual mind, conscious only of the influx of heavenly thoughts and feelings. Then his evils are all quiescent. He is in an elevated and peaceful state, and it seems as if he were entirely free from evils. The inordinate cravings of the natural man—his selfish greed of gain and lust of power and pre-eminence, with all the thoughts and feelings therein originating—are hushed to rest. It seems as if he were, indeed, regenerated; as if he had overcome and were rid of all his evils. He is conscious of loving nothing but what is good and true, and seems to be in complete and permanent fellowship with the angels. This is a state of spiritual exaltation, a state of the internal or spiritual man when withdrawn from the blinding and disturbing influence of the external or natural man.

At other times the same individual is in a low or external state—in that state of the external or natural mind when all its inordinate passions and selfish desires and worldly cravings are aroused, and he seems to be subject to an influx from the hells alone. The serene light and blessed warmth of the upper spheres seem to be shut out from him. The sweet influences of the angels appear to be entirely withdrawn, and he is beset apparently on all sides by infernal spirits. He seems to have no love but what is evil, no delight in anything but the gratification of self.

Now every regenerating man and woman has had experience of these two very different mental states,—one, the state of the internal or spiritual, the other that of the external or natural man. And speaking according to his own perception or feelings in each of these states, he would say when in his exalted or spiritual state that he was near to the Lord, wholly resigned to His will, spiritually conjoined to Him, free from evil, thoroughly regenerate, for so it seems at the time. But the same individual, when in the state of his external or natural mind, seems to himself to be utterly alienated from the Lord, far removed from Him spiritually, in great mental obscurity, thoroughly in love with evil, yea, nothing but evil; and speaking according to his perceptions in this state, he would speak of himself as thoroughly alienated from God and altogether evil.

Thus the same individual may speak, and speak truthfully, in very different ways concerning himself, according as he speaks from the state of his internal and spiritual or his external and natural mind. Speaking from the former state he may say that he enjoys the peace and sunshine of heaven, is near to and closely conjoined with the Lord. And speaking from the latter state, he may say with equal truthfulness that he is like "the troubled sea which cannot rest," etc., that he is alienated and far removed from the Lord, and thoroughly immersed in evil. And he may be in one of these states this week and in the other the next; yea, in one of them to-day and in the other to-morrow. And though his character, and the language he may use in reference to himself, may be so very different in these two states that he seems like two different persons, yet he is all the while one and the same individual,—the same identical mind or person, but in different degrees of mental elevation, or in different states. And through these varying and alternating states—now lifted up and now cast down, now breathing the fragrant air of heaven and now the mephitic vapors of hell, through dark and dismal nights as well as bright and joyous days, through long and dreary winters as well as sweet and cheerful summers, every one who is preparing for the kingdom is carried forward in the regenerate life.

And from these two states, experienced by every regenerating person, it is easy to see what in general were those two states in which our Lord was when He tabernacled in human flesh. One was His state of exaltation, the state of His inmost, in which He perceived and felt His perfect oneness with the Divine,—felt and thought and spoke as God: the other was His state of humiliation, in which He was altogether in the finite human derived from the mother,—and thinking and speaking from that state, and according to His own perceptions in that state, He thought and spoke and acted as a mere man; He was as conscious of His separation from the Divine as any merely human being; He felt all the weaknesses and wants of a man; and therefore He prayed to the Father within Him as if to another and separate being from Himself, just like any other man. Praying from His merely external or assumed humanity, it could not seem otherwise to Him in that state than that He was a frail and finite being, and personally as separate from the Father and as dependent on Him as you or I.

The Lord, then, while on earth, was, by virtue of the humanity which He derived from the mother, as to His external or outermost, altogether human—was a man in every respect; but as to His inmost He was entirely different from all other men,—was Jehovah God, Life itself, and not a mere form recipient of life. This difference in His inmost, which He had from conception, and which constituted His essential Divinity—together with the two states which He had when on earth—is well stated in the following passage from the Heavenly Arcana:—

> "That the Lord adored and prayed to Jehovah, His Father, is known from the Word in the Evangelists; and that He did this as to a being different from Himself, although Jehovah was in Him. But the state in which the Lord was at such times was His state of humiliation, the character of which was described in the First Part of this work, where it was shown that He was then in the infirm humanity derived from the mother. But so far as He put off that humanity, and put on the Divine, He was in a different state, which is called His state of glorification. In the former state He adored Jehovah as a person different from Himself, although He was in Himself; for, as stated above, His internal was Jehovah: but in

the latter, viz., the state of glorification, He discoursed with Jehovah as with Himself, for He was Jehovah Himself. . . . In proportion, therefore, as the Lord was in the humanity which He received hereditarily from the mother, He appeared distinct from Jehovah, and adored Jehovah as a being different from Himself; but in proportion as He put off this humanity, the Lord was not distinct from Jehovah, but one with Him.

"The former state, as remarked above, was the Lord's state of humiliation, but the latter was His state of glorification." (A. C. 1999.)

We thus see that the Divine and the human of our Lord when on earth were related like the internal and the external, or like the spiritual and natural mind of man before his regeneration is complete. These, though apparently two distinct minds, are not really so, but parts of one and the same mind. And as man was originally created in the likeness of God, so now he is regenerated after the likeness of the Lord's glorification. As the Lord when on earth had two very different states, and was alternately in them both, so has every one of His followers—every regenerating man and woman. As He, when wholly immersed in the humanity derived from the mother, had no consciousness of His essential Divinity or of His personal oneness with God, so we, when in an external and natural state or immersed in the thoughts and feelings of the natural mind, have no conception of the light and life of the spiritual mind, and no consciousness of our personal connection with that mind or of its being the most essential part of ourselves. As the work of glorification with Him consisted in bringing the human at-one with the Divine, infilling every portion of it with the essential Divinity, and thus making it a Divine Human, so the work of regeneration consists in bringing our natural at-one with our spiritual man, or in subjecting all the passions, inclinations, and feelings of the former to the sovereign and benign control of the latter, thus "making," as the Apostle says, "of twain one new man, and so making peace." And as it was by means of temptation combats admitted into His assumed humanity—by steadfastly denying, resisting, and overcoming all the selfish promptings of that humanity, and thereby subjugating all the hells, that the Lord's glorification was accomplished, so it is by a similar process—by denying, resisting, and overcoming our hereditary selfish propensities, that the natural mind is brought at-one with the spiritual, or the external at-one with the internal, and our regeneration accomplished.

And thus it becomes plain what is meant by following the Lord in the regeneration, and what it is to be His disciples. Our regeneration is an exact image of His glorification. And not only so, but in consequence of His glorification, from His own Divine Humanity, comes all our disposition and power to deny self, take up our cross, and follow Him. It is He, therefore, in His glorified Humanity, who fights all our battles for us, renews us in His own likeness, makes our natural man spiritual according to the same divine method by which He made His own assumed human Divine.

XXVII.

THE UNJUST STEWARD.

And He said unto His disciples, There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods, etc.—LUKE XVI, 1–8.

All who sincerely look to the Lord and are endeavoring to learn and practise the truths of wisdom contained in His Word, truths that relate to the soul's best welfare, are His disciples. And all such, since they *desire* heavenly instruction, can receive it. They can understand, as far as is needful, what the Lord says to them.

The *rich man* in this parable denotes the Lord. He is perfect Man—the Divine Man. And how inconceivably rich is He! All the treasures of infinite love and wisdom, and all the knowledge of men and angels, and infinitely more, are His. What is there in heaven or on earth, what of spiritual or natural wealth, whereof He is not the lawful proprietor? What single thing have we, what powers of body or mind, what capabilities of reason or love, which are not His? All that makes men or angels good and wise is from the Lord, and is given to them every moment. We are but the stewards of His bounty.

A *steward* is one whose business it is to take charge of the property or goods belonging to another. He is not himself the proprietor, and is therefore bound to render an account to the rightful owner of whatever is entrusted to his care. And since we have nothing which can be properly called our own, but everything we have is the Lord's gift to us, therefore we and all men are His stewards.

There are spiritual as well as natural goods. And since the Word is given to instruct us in spiritual things, therefore it is spiritual goods that are spoken of in this parable, understood in its proper sense. And these are all the treasures of the understanding, the knowledges of goodness and truth derived from the Word, for the Word is the source of all heavenly knowledge among men.

But natural goods (meaning every kind of natural wealth) may be abused or wasted. They are abused when hoarded, and so kept unemployed, or when employed in a harmful or useless way, when used in a manner to injure individuals or communities, or in any way that does not subserve the interests of humanity.

And so may spiritual goods, all heavenly knowledges or truths, be abused or wasted. They may be hoarded in the memory in rich abundance, and suffered to lie there unemployed, like gold in the coffers of the miser.

Or they may be used to pamper spiritual pride, to gain us a reputation for uncommon wisdom, or to decorate our own persons that we may attract admiration. In either case they are wasted, since they are not used according to the will of the great Giver. Heavenly knowledge is properly used only when it is made subservient to the purification of the soul from its disorderly loves, to the subjugation of an inordinate pride, and selfishness. It is only when this knowledge is thus applied to life that it becomes appropriated, and so abides with us permanently.

Everything that God gives us He gives for use—all our natural and our spiritual wealth, all our powers of body and of mind. And natural wealth, we know, increases only with the using. So all our bodily and mental powers are strengthened and perfected by the using, but enfeebled and wasted through inaction, or by not being used.

Now when an individual who has lived a thoughtless, heedless, selfish life, wholly unmindful of what the laws of heavenly charity that have been treasured up in his memory require—when his past life comes up in review before him and he remembers how he has abused the goods which the Heavenly Father has entrusted to his care, how he has hitherto frustrated the benignant purpose for which the heavenly truths he has learned were bestowed—when he sees and seriously reflects on all this, he is then in the state of the steward in the parable. Before the bar of the Supreme Judge he stands self-accused—a negligent, faithless, guilty steward, who has abused and so wasted his Master's goods.

And in this state it appears as if the Lord were the accuser. But it is not so. The Lord is love itself; and it is no more in the nature of love to accuse than to condemn or punish. But for our good He permits us to be brought into states of temptation and suffer the infestations of evil spirits. It is these spirits who accuse us. They take delight in arraying before us all our past offenses and derelictions of duty when we are in a state to be most painfully affected by them. They will endeavor to aggravate our guilt by sometimes exaggerating the disorder of our lives, even suggesting, as not unfrequently they do, that we have committed the unpardonable sin. How much suffering would be saved if people only knew whence such distressing thoughts and fears come. For they never come from those who love us and desire to make us happy; but from spirits who hate us and would, if possible, separate us from the Divine Mercy.

And when brought into this state of temptation and conflict, then we hear the voice of the Lord calling to us and saying: "How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." Language which appears harsh and severe in the literal sense, but is really full of tenderest love and mercy. In their spiritual sense, these words reveal the commencement of a course of self-exploration. We cannot get the mastery over hell within us until we are brought to see that there is a hell within and to understand something of its nature. We cannot overcome our evils until we see and inwardly acknowledge that we are in evils. And some self-examination is necessary to this. When an individual has been brought to reflect seriously upon his past life or present state, and feels self-accused on account of his unfaithfulness in the use of the heavenly treasures entrusted to him, he is led to inquire *why* he has wasted his Master's goods. And this is well; for until the cause of his unfaithfulness is known, it cannot be removed. This inquiry is expressed in the words, "How is it that I hear this of thee?" as though the Master were offended; but these words in their internal sense contain nothing harsh or accusatory, but are full of tenderest love. They are the dictate of Divine Mercy, a call to the faithless steward to search within himself for the cause of his unfaithfulness, that he may be able to remove it. And the same tender and pitying love further says: "Give an account of thy stewardship."

Surely the Lord has no need to be informed of the manner in which we use His gifts, for He knows our every act, yea, our inmost thoughts and motives. It is not on His account, therefore, but on our own, that He calls upon us to give an account of our stewardship. It is well for each one of us to keep a severe reckoning with himself. It is well for us seriously to consider, each day and week of our lives, what use we have made and are making of the goods entrusted to us by the Heavenly Father. Therefore the command, "Give an account of thy stewardship," viewed according to its internal sense, is an invitation of the Divine Mercy to man, urging him to a serious and thorough examination of himself—his prevailing dispositions and feelings, his motives of action, his aims in life—that he may see and judge how far he has properly used, and how far he has abused or wasted, his Master's goods. But, although Divine Love is perpetually calling to every one to give an account of his stewardship, yet its gracious voice is not always heard; is never heard, indeed, until a consciousness of unfaithfulness has been awakened in the soul.

And the same tender love and mercy are revealed in the spiritual sense of the next clause, " for thou mayst be no longer steward." When a person examines himself by the light of Divine truth, particularly with reference to the manner in which he has used the heavenly knowledges entrusted to his care, and when he sees how he has abused or wasted the Divine Master's goods, he cannot but be deeply humbled. He feels himself an unworthy steward. He sees that it would be but just in the Lord to deprive him of the heavenly knowledges which he has treated with such indifference and neglect, and, indeed, that he certainly will be deprived of them unless through religious obedience they become incorporated into his life. And in this way the purpose of Divine Love and Mercy in regard to that individual is accomplished.

The end which the Lord has in view in calling us to give an account of our stewardships is, that we may be led to see how we have wasted the goods His love entrusted to us, and thereby be brought into such a state of humiliation, contrition, and self-abasement that He can draw nearer to us and impart to our souls more of the delights of His own love; it is, that we may attain unto a blissful union with Himself,—that from faithless stewards we may be converted into cordial and loving friends. As He says: " Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends;

for all things which I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you."

"But the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my Lord taketh away from me the stewardship,"—words which express in general a state of anxiety and alarm about their spiritual state which the persons here denoted feel, when, upon a careful self-examination, they find they have not made a proper use of the goods committed to their care. And it is well—exceedingly useful—that such anxiety should be awakened. "The steward said within himself:" What we think interiorly is what we *say* within ourselves. And when anxiety about our spiritual condition is awakened, the interiors of our minds are opened toward heaven; and thinking interiorly under the prompting influence of the angels, we inquire what there is for us to do? or by what means we may be delivered from the evil consequences of our own unfaithfulness. The anxious and earnest inquiry within the awakened soul then is, "What shall I do? For my Lord taketh away from me the stewardship."

"I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed." These words, in their spiritual sense, reveal a state of profound humility and self-abasement. They are the utterance of a soul that is inwardly conscious of its own weakness, destitution, and unworthiness, that is too full of shame and self-reproach to even look into heaven or beg the Divine forgiveness. When a man comes to feel his own weakness and destitution, when he perceives that he has no wisdom or strength of his own, and that in and of himself he is unable to procure the spiritual sustenance that he needs, he is then in the state revealed in the spiritual sense of the words, "I cannot dig." And when he feels so overwhelmed with a sense of his guilt and unworthiness that he is ashamed to look to the Lord,—ashamed to implore the Divine Mercy,—when it seems as if heaven were shut against him and his petitions could not be heard, then he is in the state revealed in the spiritual sense of the words, "to beg I am ashamed."

Such is the case with all, in a greater or less degree, when they are let into spiritual temptations. One great purpose of such temptations is, to produce within us a profounder humility, to weaken our self-confidence and self-trust, and lead us to rely more implicitly on the Lord. And when, through an awakened conscience, we have been brought to inquire within ourselves, What shall we do?—and through temptations have been brought into a state of deep humility and made inwardly conscious of our own weakness and inability and utter unworthiness, indicated in the spiritual sense of the words, "I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed,"—then new strength is given us from on high. It is given us to perceive and determine what we will do. The influent Divine life, which we are able to receive in this lowly state, leads us to form the resolution expressed in the words of the next verse:—

"I am resolved what to do; that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses." "To be put out of the stewardship," when that state of internal anxiety and humble acknowledgment of which I have spoken has been reached, is really to be advanced to a higher state,—to a state in which love to the Lord is the animating principle. And this is the expressed resolution, revealed in the spiritual sense of the words, "that they may receive me into their houses." *Houses* denote the interiors of the mind and of the church, or those states of the mind in which love to the Lord and the neighbor bear rule. And to be received into their houses is to be brought into such states. This is manifest from the internal sense of the words that immediately follow:—

> "So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill and sit down quickly and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill and write fourscore."

First, *every one* of the debtors is spoken of as if there were many. But afterward, only *two* are mentioned. The *two* denote the will and the understanding; and *every one* of the debtors denotes every faculty of the mind, every affection of the will, and every thought of the understanding. We are indebted to the Lord for each and all our faculties, and are therefore responsible to Him for the use we make of them. And in an abstract sense, the faculties themselves, the powers of love, thought, memory, taste, imagination, owe to the Lord all their life, strength, and joy. Every one of them is His debtor, for it owes to Him its very existence.

And the class of persons denoted by the debtors, being now brought into that humble state of mind in which they acknowledge their indebtedness to the

Lord for all their powers,—for every pure and innocent delight which their bosoms have ever known,—therefore one of the debtors in the parable is represented as saying that he owes to his lord "a hundred measures of oil," whereby are signified all the powers of affection or all the feelings of love in the will. And the other as saying that he owes "a hundred measures of wheat," whereby are denoted all the powers of thought or all the perceptions of truth in the understanding. All these are the Lord's debtors, for they owe to Him their very existence. And we owe to Him all we have and all we are.

But the Lord does not require us to pay Him what we owe. He only requires us to acknowledge our obligations—to see and humbly own our indebtedness to Him; and He desires this purely for our own good, for He sees that without such acknowledgment He cannot impart to us the joys of heaven nor bless us as He would. Therefore the steward in the parable is represented as saying to one of the debtors, who acknowledged all his indebtedness (a hundred measures, etc.), "Take thy bill and sit down quickly and write fifty;" and to the other, "Take thy bill and write fourscore." This is the way the debt is canceled. The number *fifty* denotes a little, *but all of that little*, as a hundred denotes much, and *all of that*. Therefore by the expression, "Take thy bill and sit down quickly and write fifty," is denoted, according to the spiritual sense, that the persons in the humble state of mind here described, feel that for all the immense debt which they owe the Lord, for all His unutterable love,—the hundred measures of oil,—they have only a very little, only fifty, to give in payment. But little though it be, they freely give it all to Him, or what is the same, they thankfully acknowledge it as His.

But to the other whose indebtedness was acknowledged to be "a hundred measures of wheat," he did not say "write fifty," but "Take thy bill and write fourscore." *Fourscore* denotes a state of temptation. Now it is by means of truths in the understanding that we are enabled to endure temptations; and the higher and purer the truths the deeper can we with safety be let into temptations; for truths are our only weapons of defense against evil spirits. Hence, by the expression, "Take thy bill and write fourscore," is meant, according to the spiritual sense, that the individuals who are in this state—in return for the hundred measures of wheat, or for all the knowledge of the way of salvation which they have received and for which they are indebted to the Lord alone—are willing to pass through all the various states of trial and temptation which may be required for their further humiliation and for the purification of their hearts from selfish and evil loves.

This is all that Divine Love requires of us, a sincere and hearty acknowledgment of our indebtedness to the Divine Mercy, and a willingness, with humble dependence on the Lord, to suffer all the temptations and trials needful for the vanquishing of our evil loves. When we have been brought into this state of conscious dependence and humble acknowledgment of our indebtedness, our debts are all canceled. The Lord has no charge against us which is not that moment all wiped out. Therefore it is said that he "commended the unjust steward, because he had done prudently;" commended him not for his injustice, but for his prudence in securing the favor of his lord's debtors. "For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

XXVIII.

THE AT-ONE-MENT.

Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.—JOHN xiii, 31.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme and only God, and the only proper object of worship according to the Scripture. It was Jehovah God whose advent the prophets foretold. And when He came, He declared Himself to be the personal revelation of God to men, the visible manifestation of the everlasting Father. He spoke the words, and did the deeds, and displayed the wisdom, love, and power of God. And in that sublime Apocalypse with which the sacred canon closes, we behold Him surrounded by adoring angels, who proclaim Him the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty," and who offer Him the supreme homage of their hearts, "casting their crowns before the throne, and saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

But Jesus Christ had a human as well as a Divine side to His nature. If the Scripture shows Him to have been the infinite Jehovah, it certainly shows Him with equal clearness to have been a finite man, subject to all the conditions and limitations of our finite humanity. As a man, He ate, drank, slept, walked, conversed; He increased in wisdom as He grew in stature; He was subject to temptation like other men; He prayed, wept, sorrowed, suffered, died. Thus He had, when on earth, a twofold nature. He was both Divine and human. He was God, and at the same time man. I know that some regard this as unreasonable. But in reality it is not so. For has not every man, before regeneration, a twofold nature? Has he not a spiritual and a carnal nature? Has he not, as it were, two wills directly in conflict with each other?—one of them supremely selfish and worldly, the other having supreme regard to the Lord and the neighbor? Does not all internal conflict or temptation imply the existence of something like two wills, two antagonistic tendencies or natures? Hence that inward warfare of which the Apostle speaks, the flesh warring against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; that is, the selfish or hereditary nature against the heavenly, and the heavenly against the selfish. And in harmony with this idea of a twofold nature, we find the same Apostle speaking of Jesus Christ making "in Himself *of twain* one new man, and so making peace." What that *twain* in Him was, which He reconciled or made one, will be seen as we proceed. Then, too, nothing is more common among Christians of every name than to hear them speak of man's higher and lower nature, clearly recognizing by this very language a twofold nature in us all.

But the inmost of every man, as we are instructed, is from the father; while the body and the externals of the mind are from the mother. Now, Jesus Christ had no natural father. We have the words of Scripture for this. He was conceived of Jehovah God, and therefore was Divine as to His inmost from His very conception. This may be concluded from the angel's announcement to Mary: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; *therefore*, also that Holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Thus the very Divine Being Himself, and not some fancied second person in the Trinity, assumed our natural humanity. He came into the world according to the laws of His own established order, by being born of a woman. From the mother He derived all of His natural humanity, all that was frail and finite,—His material body and all those hereditary proclivities to evil which appertain to our fallen humanity. As to His inmost, therefore, He was while on earth Jehovah God; but as to that external humanity which He assumed in time, or which He derived from the mother, He was like any other man, save that His humanity never yielded in temptation. As the Apostle says, "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

And what was the purpose of the Lord's advent in the flesh? Why did He assume humanity, or what did He thereby accomplish? Not, says the New Church, to make an expiatory sacrifice for sin, for sin cannot be wiped out in that way. Not to appease the Divine wrath, for there was no such wrath that needed appeasing. Not to satisfy Divine justice by suffering in the place of sinners, for such substituted suffering were the veriest mockery of justice.

Yet it was to achieve a great and glorious redemption that He came. It was to deliver mankind from sin and its consequences. It was to subjugate the hells and reduce them to order, and so bind humanity more closely to Himself in the bonds of everlasting love and peace. No one denies or doubts that this was the great purpose of His advent, viz., the re-union of mankind with Himself. For spiritual union with God is redemption and salvation; and alienation or separation from Him is perdition and woe.

Man, while he remained in the state of innocence in which he was originally created, was in union with his Maker. His will was at one with the Divine will. The laws of God were written upon his heart, and it was his delight to obey the Divine behests. He had no will of his own that was opposed to the Lord's will. He did, and found delight in doing, what the Lord loved to have him do. This was a state of order—the golden age of the world; and this early, blissful state is represented in the symbolic language of Scripture by the Garden of Eden, in which the primitive man is said to have been placed when God first created him.

But man did not remain in this state. Through the abuse of his human faculties, liberty, and rationality, stimulated by the cravings of his sensual nature (the serpent), he gradually came to love himself and the world more than he loved the Lord and the neighbor. And so by degrees he fell into a more and more external, carnal, selfish, worldly state. Thus the intimate union which originally existed between himself and the Lord was sundered. Man lost his primitive innocence, his state of sweet, unselfish love, and with it he lost his blissful Eden. Therefore he is said to have been driven out of the garden. And the more he indulged his pride and love of self the more did his mind become filled with evil and falsity, and the farther did he remove himself from his original happy state of union with the Lord; until at last the human race became, as described by the Prophet Isaiah, "a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers." The whole natural mind was disordered and defiled through the predominance of the love of self. "From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there was no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores."

But the Lord in His mercy did not forsake men when they had wandered so far away from Him. But He loved them still and pursued them even to the pit of degradation into which they had plunged. He was not angry with them, although, on account of their own inverted state, it must needs appear to them as if He were. For every one sees God according to his own state. Hence the reason why He is represented in the literal sense of the Word as being angry with the wicked. He is so apparently; but their own state is what causes this appearance. He was moved with inconceivable tenderness and pity toward our race in their fallen state. As saith the inspired Prophet: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them." He assumed our nature, with its selfish tendencies and evil inclinations. He came down to man by clothing Himself with our disordered and corrupted humanity. Yes, the essential Divine Love and Wisdom —He whom no eye hath seen or can see in His unveiled purity—came down, by the assumption of humanity, into all our human conditions and limitations, had experience of all our doubts and fears, our darkness and distress, our weaknesses and wants, our temptations and struggles, our sorrows and sufferings; and in and through these natural conditions and human experiences, He revealed Himself as He had never done before and could not have done otherwise. He suffered all that frail and finite humanity can suffer, save the consciousness of guilt and sin. He suffered the combined assaults of all the hells, and nothing is so terrible as these. So that in Him was fulfilled the saying of the Prophet Isaiah, "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." (Is. liii, 4, 5.)

One object, and indeed the principal object of the Lord's advent, was the subjugation of the hells, and the reduction of them to some degree of order. Previous to His advent, the minds of men were so immersed in evil and falsity that the light of heaven could not enter. The Jewish Church, it is true, had the Word, but they understood nothing of its real meaning. They had crucified in their hearts its Divine spirit and life. They could receive, through the medium of their sacred writings, no genuine truth whatever; nor could they receive any by immediate influx from the Lord. For truth, when it flows into any mind, takes on a form corresponding to the state of that mind. Even the representative Jewish Church was consummated. It had lived out its days and done its work. The minds of men were encompassed by the sphere of hell, which was perpetually becoming more and more powerful. Indeed, hell had so enlarged its borders and augmented its power, that infernal spirits not only darkened men's understandings and breathed hatred and all manner of evil into their hearts, but they had begun to take possession of their bodies also. (Possessions, etc.) They even threatened the stability and integrity of the angelic heavens. Accordingly, the herald of the New Jerusalem says:—

> "Before the coming of the Lord, the hells had risen to such a height that they began to infest the very angels of heaven, and likewise every man. . . . The reason was, that the church was utterly devastated; and men in the world were in mere falsity and evil, and the hells are from men." (D. L. 33.)

In this condition of things it was not possible for the Lord to deliver men from their state of bondage to evil spirits, either by instruction imparted immediately from Himself or mediately through the Word. To redeem and save them from hell, it was necessary that Divine Wisdom should seek some new way of access to the minds and hearts of men. To save them, or lift them out of their fallen state, it was necessary that He should come down to them in that state. To conquer the hells, or reduce them to a state of order, it was necessary that He should take upon Himself some medium, in and through which He could come near to the hells and the hells near to Him. And what should that medium be but the same deranged and polluted humanity which He came to redeem, and which was open to an influx from all the hells. Accordingly, He assumed humanity with all its corrupt inclinations. And with His Divinity thus veiled, He could draw near to the very worst of the devils without destroying them. He could touch the hells, so to speak, and did touch them at all points. He admitted into His humanity the fiercest assaults of all the infernals. He thus had an actual experience of the nature of that life which is the exact opposite of His own; an experience of the nature of every temptation that ever did or ever can flow from hell; an experience of every vain imagination, subtle persuasion, blinding delusion, sensual passion, worldly craving, and selfish lust of dominion that any mortal ever experienced. So that there never was and never can be any temptation, any assault from the powers of darkness, which the blessed Saviour has not Himself experienced. And He was always victorious in temptation. The powers of hell always yielded to His all-conquering might. And at every conquering step of His the hells were subjugated and more and more reduced to order. And having once met and subdued in His own assumed human all the evil inclinations of hell, He is now and forever able to impart to all who look to Him and will follow after Him the light and strength they need to give them the victory over the hell within themselves. Once a conqueror, He is always a conqueror.

But we should not forget how it was, or through what instrumentality, the Lord subjugated the hells and forever holds them in subjugation to Himself. It was by means of the truth or through obedience to the laws of His own Divine order. He came as the Truth, as the everlasting Word, which was in the beginning with God and was God. And He *lived* the very truth which He taught and was. He obeyed all the laws of redeeming love, all the Divine and infinite truths of His own Word. He lived these laws here on earth; lived them in defiance of all the subtle persuasions of hell to the contrary; lived them down on that natural human plane where you and I, and all yet in the flesh, are now living and struggling.

In this way, by living the everlasting laws of His own order here in ultimates, the Lord glorified the natural humanity which He assumed. He freed it from all its limitations, and purged it of all its defilements. He filled it with a new and Divine life. He permeated and saturated it, and made it all alive and aglow with His own Divine love and wisdom. In a word, He brought this humanity *at-one* with the essential Divinity which was in Him from conception, and so made it a Divine Humanity. And when this great work was accomplished—and it was not a sudden but a gradual work, continued during the whole term of our Lord's sojourn on earth—then the Son was glorified in the Father and the Father in the Son. The great reconciliation was achieved. Humanity was brought at-one with Divinity. Agreeably to the words of our text: "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. The Son of man was the humanity which was glorified when it was united to the Divinity; and God was the essential Divinity, which was gloriously revealed or conspicuously manifested in and through the humanity with which it was united.

But although we speak of the Lord Jesus Christ as Divine—as God Himself—yet we concede that He was not *all* Divine while He tabernacled in the flesh. The process of glorification, or of uniting the Divine to the human and the human to the Divine, was a gradual process. Accordingly we read that Christ *sanctified* Himself that His followers also might be sanctified through the truth (John xvii, 19), and that He *increased* in wisdom—expressions which show that the work of glorification was not instantaneous but gradual, like all truly Divine operations. And until the work of glorification was finished it could not be said of Christ that He was Divine even to ultimates. Neither could that holy effluence proceed from Him which He was able to shed down upon the hearts of men *after* His human was brought *at-one* with the Divine and He could say, "It is finished." Hence, when He told His disciples it was necessary that He should go away, or disappear from their outward view, in order that He might send them the Comforter, it is added: "But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe in Him *should* receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Not that the Holy Spirit did not exist *absolutely*, as one element of the Divine Trinity, prior to the Incarnation. But that special dispensation of the Spirit which the church now enjoys, and which came as a consequence of the glorification of the humanity—that Divine influence which the Lord is now able to impart and render operative in the lowest or ultimate degree of human life, could not be imparted *before* on account of the closed condition of the natural mind. *Relatively* speaking, therefore, the Holy Spirit *was not*, previous to the glorification of the humanity. That closed or disordered degree of the mind, which was opened, sanctified, and redeemed through the Divine Incarnation, has ever since been capable of receiving the quickening and renewing influences of the Spirit. It is *as if* God's power to enlighten and save mankind were actually increased by that new union or at-one-ment of His Divinity with our fallen humanity, which He effected in the person of Jesus Christ. And relatively—*i. e.*, in relation to mankind, it is so. Hence the Son of Man is often spoken of in the Bible as exalted to the right hand of power, and seated at the right hand of God. And this language has been interpreted in its strictly literal sense by those who believe God to be tri-personal and who have not understood the symbolic character of the Bible. But with just as good reason might we interpret the Scripture literally, when Christ is called a Lion or a Lamb. All such Scripture symbols are easily explained by the law of correspondence. The *hand* is the symbol of power; and the *right* hand, of the power of truth from love. *God's* right hand, therefore, denotes the power of His divine truth proceeding from His divine love, or the power of His humanity when perfectly united with His Divinity. To *sit* is to teach and judge according to the truth. Therefore, by the Son's sitting at the right hand of God, is denoted the perfect union of the human with the Divine, whereby it was endued with omnipotence and omniscience—with all wisdom to teach and judge, and with all power over the evils that infest humanity—absolute power over all the hells. Hence, the Lord said to His disciples when He appeared after His resurrection: "*All* power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." This, surely, can be nothing less than omnipotence.

Such, briefly, is the New Church doctrine on this great subject. It is the doctrine concerning the great reconciliation or at-one-ment. It is God's method of re-uniting Himself to our race, and our race to Himself, after the fearful lapse into selfishness and sin.

And it presents us not with the unreasonable and Pagan dogma of a stern and angry God, whose wrath could be appeased, and whose justice could be satisfied only by an expiatory sacrifice—the agony and crucifixion of His only begotten Son. No. But it exhibits the one only God, our Heavenly Father, as full of sweetest, purest love, full of tenderest benignity and pity; as never turning away from His erring children, but pursuing them with outstretched arms of mercy, through all their wanderings, and into their lowest depths of degradation and woe; as finally veiling His ineffable splendors in accommodation to the states of men and devils; clothing Himself with our infirm and perverted humanity, and patiently bearing all the pains, sorrows, and sufferings to which humanity is liable; encountering the fiercest assaults from all the hells; and as the crowning act in the grand drama, enduring the agonies of crucifixion, together with all the torture that the combined hosts of hell could inflict. And all this from love toward our race; that He might purge the humanity He assumed from all its defilements, and so glorify it, or unite it with His own Divinity; and thus, through the medium of His own glorified humanity, be able to come nigh unto us and all who have faith in Him, sympathize with us in our sorrows and sufferings, shield us in temptation, cast out the evil spirits that infest us, renew us after His own likeness, bring us *at-one* with Himself in feeling and in purpose, and so save us with an everlasting salvation. As the Apostle saith: "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren that He might be made a merciful and faithful high priest: For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor those that are tempted." He, in His Divine Humanity, is our exemplar and guide, our friend and helper, our Redeemer and Saviour, ever seeking through the operation of His Spirit upon our hearts, and through all the varied discipline of life, to draw us nearer to and make us more perfectly at-one with Himself. Agreeably to His own declaration: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

XXIX.

THE HOLY SUPPER.

This do in remembrance of me.—Luke xxii, 19.

Thus spake our Divine Saviour as He distributed to the chosen twelve the bread and wine at the Passover supper. He knew that the hour of His betrayal and crucifixion was nigh. And He sent Peter and John with specific directions how to find the guest-chamber, where He might eat the Passover with His disciples. And following His directions, "they went and found a large upper room, furnished" as He had said unto them, "and they made ready the Passover." "And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

He knew that He was soon to be removed from their outward view. He knew, too, that His disciples had but a dim perception of His true character—of His essential Divinity, or of the nature of the kingdom He came to establish. But if He could keep them in remembrance of Him after His departure; if He could so connect Himself with some visible sign, some outward and tangible fact, that as often as such sign or fact were presented to them, they would be reminded of Him, He knew that His own essential Divinity, and the grandeur and glory of His kingdom, would unfold themselves more and more through the coming ages. He would, therefore, bequeath to them some legacy, which they and all who might learn of Him through them should forever associate with Himself, something which should remind them in an especial manner of Him, and of what His love and wisdom are forever doing for the salvation and joy of the world. What shall it be? Infinite Wisdom knows best. And Infinite Wisdom chooses the Paschal Supper.

"And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves." "And He took the bread and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you." And immediately He adds the words of our text, "This do in remembrance of me."

Do you ask, What is the use of such an observance? What good can it do to meet occasionally—a few times in the year—and together eat a morsel of bread and sip a few drops of wine? Can we suppose the Lord to be particularly pleased with any such formal ceremony? Surely not, unless *we* are to be in some way blessed by it. Not unless it can be made instrumental in lifting souls up from the slough of selfishness and sin, and uniting them more closely to Himself. This was the end for which the Holy Supper was instituted. Let us consider its adaptation to this end. Let us glance at the law which underlies this holy ordinance. And as the best means of its elucidation, we will cite a familiar case.

You have a friend who loves you tenderly, and whose love is fully reciprocated by you. You are often together, and are never so truly happy as when in each other's company. He is your beau ideal of a man. You see in him a beautiful combination of what you regard as the noblest human attributes. By and by that cherished friend is called by duty to some far-off land, to be absent it may be for many years. You know not that you will ever see his face again this side the grave. You visit him on the eve of his departure; and as you whisper to him your sad farewell he hands you some little token of his affection for a keep-sake, and says, "Keep this in remembrance of me." There is magic in those words and magic in that gift. However trifling in itself, it has in your eyes a value not to be estimated by gold. It is consecrated by the giver's love; it is linked mysteriously but indissolubly with himself. Whenever you look upon that little remembrancer, the image of your friend comes up before you. You seem once more to catch his lovely and inspiring smile, and to listen to his magic tones. It reminds you of all that was wisest, noblest, and best in your friend. It seems, moreover, to be endued with a persuasive power, and is ever urging you to imitate his example. If he were just and generous and brave, it kindles in your bosom a desire to be so too. If he were patient, humble, trustful, and sincere, it will invest these graces with a new and peculiar charm. If his chief delight was to serve others, to do good and communicate, you will feel your selfishness rebuked whenever you look upon his gift. And thus the little keep-sake seems animated with a living soul, and gifted with the power of speech—telling all the time about your dear absent friend, what he was and what he loved, and what he did, and urging you onward and upward in the same path of noble endeavor, of usefulness and of honor.

So mysteriously does spirit link itself with matter, and so wonderfully can it consecrate the very dust of the earth.

From this familiar illustration we may see that there is a ground and reason in the very constitution of our souls for the institution of an ordinance, which should be observed by Christians throughout the ages, and which should forcibly remind them of their Divine Lord and Master, and serve to draw them into closer communication and fuller sympathy with Him. If the little gifts of affection bestowed by human friendship serve to keep fresh and green the memory of our absent earthly friends—to bring them near to us in spirit, exalt their worth in our estimation, and prevent our love for them from growing cold, then there was good reason, and a reason we can all of us understand, why our Divine Master—our heavenly Friend—when about to leave this world, should have given to His disciples something which should be the special remembrancer of Himself, some visible token of His love, which shall continually remind them of what He was and is, and of what He has done and is perpetually doing for the children of men. What shall that token be?

Mark, here, the marvelous simplicity and the infinite wisdom displayed in the selection of the gift to be bequeathed. It is no costly ornament—no gift of gold or silver or precious stones—nothing that the princes of this world prize, nothing that seems beautiful in the eyes of men. Any such natural gift must of necessity have been confined to some particular spot on earth, and could therefore never have been seen by one in ten thousand. And however beautiful or valuable, it would in time have perished or been destroyed. No; nothing of this sort would suit the purpose of the Divine Saviour. But He chooses instead a simple ceremony—unattractive in itself—beautiful only in its divine simplicity;—a ceremony which may be observed through all coming time, in thousands of places at the same moment, and by the lowliest and poorest of the children of men. He breaks some bread and distributes it among His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body." And then He hands them a cup of wine, saying: "This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you." This is the remembrancer He bequeaths to His disciples. This is the ceremony with whose observance He would have the memory of Himself pre-eminently associated through the coming ages. "This do, in remembrance of me."

How simple, yet how significant! No other ceremony means so much as this, no other has ever achieved so much for the spiritual welfare of humanity. No other is so intimately associated with the Lord Himself; no other brings Him so near, or reveals Him to us with such fulness; no other proclaims so clearly or with such emphasis what He has done and is perpetually doing for the children of men.

For eighteen hundred years, or during the period of the first Christian Dispensation, this ceremony served to keep alive in the minds of Christians the memory of what the Lord did and suffered in the flesh for the sins of the world. It reminded them especially of His last great agony, at sight of which the sun veiled his face, and there was darkness over all the land from the sixth until the ninth hour. When they received the bread and wine of the holy communion, they were reminded of the sufferings of innocence for the sins of the guilty. They beheld here the price of their redemption. They saw in the broken bread the body of their Lord nailed to the cross for the sins of the world; and in the wine they saw the blood that flowed from His side, whereby they supposed the stains of guilt were washed out from all penitent and believing souls.

And although there was nothing spiritual in this conception, although the thoughts of those who entertained it were not elevated above the merely sensuous sphere, we cannot doubt that unspeakable good was accomplished by it. It was the highest view which the first Christian Church, to whom the spiritual sense of the Word was not revealed, were able to take of the subject. And even this low, sensuous view has served to bring the Lord Jesus Christ very near to millions of believers, to keep them in remembrance of Him as their Almighty Redeemer and Saviour, to impress them with a deep sense of His matchless love, and of the terrible nature of sin, which required such a sacrifice for its atonement. It was the *apparent* truth; and so good and merciful is the Lord, that where apparent truths are believed in simplicity, He accepts them for real truths, and through their instrumentality works deliverance of the believer from the bondage of evil.

> "The greater part of those who are in the state of doing the truths commanded in the Word, or in the doctrine of the church in which they were born, are not in genuine truths, but are in falsities from ignorance; which falsities, nevertheless, are accepted by the Lord *as truths*, because such persons have for their end the good of life." (A. E. 443.)
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> "In regard to doctrinals derived from the literal sense of the Word, the case is this: that where a man is principled in them, and at the same time in a life according to them, he has in himself correspondence; for the angels attendant on him are in interior truths, while he is in exterior, and thus he has communication with heaven by doctrinals, yet according to the good of his life. As for example, when in the Holy Supper he thinks simply of the Lord in consequence of the words used on the occasion, "this is my body and this is my blood," then his attendant angels are in the idea of love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor. [Because of the correspondence.] . . . For the angels dwell with every one in his life's affections, that is, in the affections of the doctrinals according to which he lives but in no case if the life disagrees therewith." (A. C. 34, 64; also 34, 35.)

But there is a higher meaning in the ordinance of the Holy Supper than the first Christian Church were able to discern. And this higher meaning is disclosed in the spiritual sense of the Word now laid open. Through the medium of this sense we are able to draw nearer to the Lord in this ordinance, and to get a higher and truer view of His character. We are reminded by it not only of what He once did, but of what He is now and always doing for the redemption and salvation of the world. It reminds us not of death but of life; not of defeat but of victory; not of the cross but of the crown; or rather I should say, it reminds us of both cross and crown, but most forcibly of the latter; for every one must bear the cross before he can hope to win the crown. In the spiritual sense of this ordinance we see the Lord in His Divine Humanity, as the living and inexhaustible fountain of all spiritual nourishment, of all health and strength to the soul. He feeds our souls from day to day and from moment to moment, feeds us with the living bread, which is His own unselfish love. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." And because the Lord is pure, unselfish love, and love is life, therefore He is Himself the soul's own nutriment, the living bread from heaven. As He says: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Yes, love—love of truth, love of right, love of justice, love of sincerity, love of usefulness, love of humanity, love of all that is good and true—this is the food of human souls; and it is the very substance and body of the Lord. This therefore is what He means by His flesh; for it is what His flesh corresponds to. It is the true bread of God which cometh down from heaven. This, too, is what is symbolized by the bread used in the Holy Supper.

And by the wine, which represents the blood of the Lord, is symbolized His divine wisdom or truth, whereby our intellectual nature is fed and nourished.

No single truth is ours, or self-originated. For all truth is from the Lord, the same as all love and all life. He is "the Truth" as well as "the Life." And every truth that illumines our understandings is a living beam from Him, and forever in connection with Him, who is the Light of the world, the Light of life. And if we acknowledge this, the truth becomes as the very life-blood of the Lord in us. It shows us our evils, and the way to get rid of them. And thus it is a means of purifying, cleansing, and saving. Truth, therefore, is the Lord's own blood—living, divine blood. This is that blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin. And this is what is symbolized by the wine in the Holy Supper.

Bodily life, however vigorous, is not the true life. It is mere animal life. The soul's life is human life; and the soul truly lives only when it lives in union with the Lord. And we live in union with the Lord when we live in strict obedience to His laws; when He lives in us and we in Him; when our hearts are warmed and animated by His unselfish love, and our heads illumined by the light of His wisdom; and when we perceive and inwardly acknowledge that we have no goodness or truth of our own, but that it is all from the Lord. Living thus, is receiving into our souls the Lord's own life in an orderly manner. It is eating His flesh and drinking His blood in the spiritual sense; for it is having the essential elements of His own life incorporated into our spiritual being, so that they are felt by us as though they were our own. Therefore He says: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him." And without this voluntary reception of love and wisdom from the Lord, and the humble acknowledgment on our part, we have no true heavenly life. Therefore He says again: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."

And this, under the New Dispensation, is what the Holy Supper signifies. This is what it is intended to impress more deeply upon our minds—our daily and hourly dependence on the Lord for all the love we feel, and all the truth we understand, and all the useful deeds we meditate and are enabled to do. He has instituted this simple and beautiful ceremony as a means of uniting us more closely to Himself; a means of forcibly reminding us of the great truth that we live each moment from the influx of His love and wisdom, and that in the voluntary reception of these consists our true, even our heavenly life. And when He says, "This do, in remembrance of me," it is not in the way of positive command, so much as of affectionate entreaty that He speaks. It was purely for our good that this ordinance was instituted, and it is for our good that the Lord still desires its observance.

And yet some say, it is but a form—a ceremony. True, but a ceremony full of divine significance; a ceremony instituted by One who knows all our human needs, and who assures us at this His second advent that He would have His children observe it always in remembrance of Him.

Are we His disciples? Are we seeking to know and do His will? Do we wish for a closer conjunction with Him? Would we have Him fold us in His arms and carry us in His bosom, and safely shield us against all subtle persuasions and delusive snares, and gently lead us through all life's devious and rugged ways? Would we? Why, then, should we neglect any means of grace which His matchless love and wisdom have provided? Why should we neglect or turn away from this simple ceremony, as if the Divine Master had never said, "This do, in remembrance of me;" or as if we heeded not His gracious invitation?

You have a tender and loving mother who has watched over you from earliest infancy with all the tenderness of a mother's love. Shorn of her strength, she now lies prostrate on a bed of sickness, soon to depart to the other world. But before she goes, she hands you some little gift—it may be some simple ornament wrought by her own fingers and from her own hair. And she says, her voice trembling with emotion and the tears trickling down her furrowed cheeks, "Keep this, in remembrance of me." Soon she closes her eyes on the scenes of this lower world, and her spirit is welcomed by angels to the joys of a higher. Days, weeks, months roll on; by and by you sell, or give away, or burn her little gift. And if that mother should look down from heaven, we may believe she would be quite unconcerned about the gift itself; but to see that filial love and gratitude had so died out of your heart, that you could thus forget her parting words and heedlessly cast away her dying gift,—ah, if the angels ever weep, I am sure your angel mother would weep at such a sight.

But how infinitely greater and more tender is the Lord's love for us than the love of any mother! "Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee," saith the Lord. How, then, must the angels feel, when they behold any of the Lord's children—any of those who desire to learn of Him—turning away from the simple ceremony commemorative of Himself, unmindful of His gracious invitation, "This do, in remembrance of me."

XXX.

CHRISTMAS SERMON.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, etc.—LUKE II, 8–17.

Such is the brief record of an event that occurred in a little town in Western Asia, nearly nineteen hundred years ago, whose anniversary we this day celebrate. And what an event! Where in all history will you find another to compare with it, if you estimate it only by the visible results already attained? It forms the great epoch in the history of the world. The crowning event of the ages, it was the beginning of a grand and glorious march of humanity up to loftier and serener heights than it had ever reached before—up from the abyss of ignorance, superstition, hatred, and sin—toward universal justice, order, love, and peace. It was fit that it should have been foreseen and foretold by prophets, and ushered in by the song of angels, "praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

In everything connected with the birth and life of Jesus Christ there is a wonderful unity and harmony. The prophecies foretelling His advent many years—yea, centuries—before He came; His annunciation and miraculous conception; His birth, calling forth from the angelic host that song of thanksgiving and praise which so thrilled and startled the Judean shepherds; His departure to sojourn in Egypt by angelic suggestion; the words He spake, the works He did, and the power He displayed during that brief period of His ministry—healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and making the lame to walk; raising the dead, casting out devils, and stilling the tempest with His word; suffering the cruelest and most ignominious of deaths, and with His expiring breath imploring forgiveness for His murderers; the appearance of angels and the rolling away of the great stone from the door of the sepulcher, on the morning of His resurrection; rising or showing Himself alive to His disciples the third day after His crucifixion, and repeatedly on other occasions during the space of forty days; and after that appearing to them again on the Mount of Olives, whither they were led, promising to give them new light and life and power; promising that the Holy Spirit should come upon them, and that they should be endued with power from on high, and then ascending before their eyes—a cloud receiving Him out of their sight; then, agreeably to His promise, the wonderful outpouring of the Divine Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which came as a rushing mighty wind and filled the whole house where they were, and when cloven tongues as of fire sat upon each one of them, causing them to speak in various languages of which they were utterly ignorant before—a scene so extraordinary and affecting that, out of the throng assembled there, about three thousand souls were that day added to the number of His believers and followers; then the new gift of healing which the Apostles received—the new, higher, and holier life that suddenly sprang up within them—the new fellowship of the Spirit—the new feeling of joy and gladness and disinterestedness and sweet fraternal love. For as we read: "Many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people."

Here is a succession of most extraordinary events—so extraordinary that they have been called miraculous. Yet how admirably do they all agree together! How perfectly do they fit one into the other! Like some superb mosaic, every stone in which seems to have grown there, and to be absolutely essential to the completeness and beauty of the whole. Or, like some magnificent chime of bells, not one of which could be spared without producing discord. The wonderful agreement among these extraordinary events connected with the life and character of Christ is the highest evidence of their truth. It is not usual for lies to blend together in such sweet accord, or so perfectly to keep each other in tune. Single falsehoods of an extraordinary character may be invented. But who ever heard of a whole chime of such falsehoods ringing out a magnificent peal without one discordant note!

And what is the one great fact to which these events all point as unmistakably as the needle to the pole? Why, that He who was cradled in that manger, and whose advent to our earth caused the angels to sing for joy, had within Him a Divine life, a Divine intelligence, a Divine foresight, a Divine power; that His eye could penetrate all realms—that He could see into human hearts, could overleap the bounds of time and space, and sway at will the moral universe; that He was the very incarnation of Divine wisdom, love, and power—just what the Holy Scripture declares Him to be: "Immanuel, which, being interpreted is, God with us."

And the events here referred to, wonderful as they are, and full of significance—are the mere indices to events far grander and more glorious.

The birth of that Babe in Bethlehem was a new advent of Jehovah God to humanity; a nearer approach of the Heavenly Father to the children of men than had ever been made before. And for what purpose did He come and labor and suffer and die the cruel death He did? For what purpose should He, but to enlighten, redeem, and bless? He came not to condemn, but to save the world. Saving is love's mission always. He came to bring the Father forth to view; to show the children of men who the Heavenly Father is—how tender and patient and long-suffering and loving and forgiving He is. He came to establish a more intimate and sympathetic relation between Himself and the whole human race; and how could He do this, except by assuming our nature—coming down into our finite conditions and limitations, so as to have experience of all our wants and weaknesses and woes, so as to feel the lust of ambition, the cravings of avarice, the gnawings of selfishness, the bitterness of hatred, jealousy, and revenge?—how, but by so veiling His ineffable brightness that He could come into immediate and personal conflict with the embattled hosts of hell? He came to dispel the spiritual darkness that brooded over humanity, to roll back or restrain the tide of evil, to reveal the sublime capabilities of the human soul, to disclose the laws of the higher, even the heavenly life, and by living those laws Himself here on the lowest plane of human existence, to establish a more intimate and vital connection with the children of men through the medium of His own glorified humanity. And all this for the sake of imparting more of Himself—more of His own unselfish life—more of His Divine love and wisdom to the human race; for the sake of breaking down the high walls of partition between peoples and nations and churches, so that they, like Himself, might find their supreme delight in loving and serving one another.

This, then, was the grand purpose of the Lord's advent—to lift humanity up from its condition of ignorance, selfishness, degradation, and sin to a higher and nobler degree of life; to make men more like Himself in the spirit and temper of their minds, and so to bind them more closely to Him and to each other in the strong bonds of love and peace.

For this purpose He came in the flesh; for this He labored; for this He endured the assaults of all the hells; for this He bore insult and mockery and persecution and death. And in doing and suffering this He only acted according to His own Divine nature; for it is in the very nature of love to give itself and all it has for others' welfare—to labor and suffer and bleed, if it may thereby save and bless.

And ever since the Lord came in the flesh, He has been working, and is working still, toward the same great end—to inspire men's hearts with the love of all that is just and true and pure and good, and so to establish here on earth a universal kingdom of truth and righteousness—His own blessed kingdom of justice and of love.

Not long after His crucifixion, He sent the quickening and comforting influences of His spirit, as He had promised, to His disciples. Ascending, when His humanity was glorified, from the outer realm of matter to the more interior realm of spirit, He could operate with a new and increased energy upon the minds and hearts of His followers. He could impart unto them the quickening influences of His spirit as never before. Hence He said to them before His crucifixion: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." And this Comforter, He tells them, is "the Spirit of truth"—the spirit that yearns for all that is just and true and pure and right—the spirit that guides into all truth.

And not long after His departure, He comes to them with the blessed inspiration of His spirit. He inspires them to write a brief history of His birth and teachings and miracles and death. And wherever this gospel has gone—misunderstood, perverted, falsified though it has been—there has been awakened something of the Divine Master's spirit. And where it has circulated most widely, been read most freely, its spirit best comprehended, and its precepts most heeded, there do we find the most advanced civilization; there is the truest appreciation of justice and the rights of man; there education—the education of all classes—is most thought of; there institutions of learning are most numerous and flourishing; there science and the arts are most cultivated; there legislation is the wisest, the laws most beneficent and best administered; there the noblest charities most abound—the best asylums for the weak, helpless, unfortunate, and erring; there penal enactments are wisest and most humane and just; there minds and bodies too are most active, industries most varied, inventions most prolific; there we see the most intelligence, order, contentment, and peace; the greatest freedom of thought and action, the largest benevolence, the utmost toleration, the sweetest charity, the noblest manhood, the truest womanhood, the brightest, loveliest, happiest homes.

All these things, and ten thousand others like them, follow in the wake of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as surely as verdure and flowers and the thousand beauties of the landscape follow the return of the summer's sun. And most abundantly where the gospel is best understood and its precepts most heeded.

But the gospel, in and of itself, has no transforming or renewing efficacy. Apart from Him who inspired it, and who is Himself its substance, life, and soul, it were as powerless as a sword without an arm to wield it, or as the body without its animating soul. Wherever the gospel has gone—misunderstood and perverted, even as its meaning has been—the Lord Jesus Christ, the central figure and life of the gospel, has gone with it. It is He, and He alone, that has wrought all its triumphs; it is He who has enlightened and uplifted the world; it is He who has quickened the hearts of His followers; it is He who has inspired the noble charities, organized the fruitful industries, shaped the beneficent legislation, lifted the burdens from the oppressed (so far as they have been lifted), broken the fetters of the slave, established wise and benevolent institutions and prospered their growth, poured light and strength and comfort into myriads of sorrow-stricken hearts, and gilded and gladdened the hopes of dying millions by the prospect and promise of a blissful immortality.

Yes; the Christ of history is, indeed, the light of the world. He is the center and source of all that is noblest in our modern civilization,—of all that is purest in literature, and grandest in art, and sublimest in achievement, divinest in institutions, and sweetest and holiest in human hearts and homes.

And now He may be seen—*is* seen by many—coming again, not in person, but in spirit; coming in the power and glory of His now unsealed Word; coming to carry forward to its full and final consummation the sublime purpose of His first advent. Through cloud and storm, through sorrow and suffering, through battle and blood, He is striving to come nearer to His children here on earth, to lay His great heart on the throbbing heart of humanity, and awaken there a sympathetic feeling of love, and a willingness to live and labor and suffer for the good of others; striving to overcome the littlenesses and meannesses and hatreds of sect and caste—the antipathies of nationality and color and creed, and to incorporate His own unselfish life into the heart of humanity; to organize the eternal principles of right into institutions and laws, into governments and industries, and so to establish the reign of universal love and justice—the kingdom of heaven here on earth.

This was the sublime purpose of the Lord's first advent; this *is* the purpose of His second coming—to deliver mankind from the bondage of sin and ignorance, to illumine the world with His wisdom and gladden it with His love. And this cheering prospect it is the high privilege of every enlightened Christian to contemplate. This, doubtless, was the vision which the angels saw, when they chanted in the ears of the listening shepherds that song of thanksgiving and praise, "Glory to God in the highest," etc.

Be it ours to-day, and all our days, to join with the angels in their glad refrain, and to sing, not with our lips alone, but with our hearts and lives, the *Gloria in excelsis.*

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